

***Bringing it Home:  
A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study  
of Teenagers Doing Lectio Divina with their Parents***

by

**Peter John Hobbs**

A project thesis

submitted to the faculty of

The Institute for Christian Formation and Leadership of

Virginia Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

**March 21, 2013**



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## ABSTRACT

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For many years, the parish of Christ Church Bells Corners in Ottawa, Ontario has made the faith formation of children and youth a high priority. As the Rector, I began to suspect the results of this ministry were fragile.

Social science has demonstrated that Canadian mainline churches have experienced a demographic decline and face an uncertain future. The Anglican Church of Canada, for example, exists now as a de-facto disestablished, remnant Christian entity in the early years of a post-Christendom epoch. Within this context congregations must partner with parents and households in the faith formation of young people. The act of ministry at the heart of this thesis project is a hermeneutic phenomenological, qualitative inquiry of the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* with their parents at home during Lent 2012.

While the hermeneutic phenomenological method calls for a bracketing of prior knowledge and presuppositions, at the outset of the project I anticipated that participating teenagers would demonstrate a willingness to discuss matters of faith, engage in theological reflection, find comfort and enjoyment in doing *Lectio Divina* with their parents, and show interest in continued spiritual practices at home. The methodology culminates in an exhaustive description of the experience. In the concluding chapter I offer reflections, learnings, and recommendations pertaining specifically to an ongoing partnership between parent, pastor and congregation as well as the usefulness of hermeneutic phenomenology within the frames of pastoral and practical theology.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the culmination of a journey begun in the autumn of 2009 when I began Doctor of Ministry studies at the Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS). Since then I have been challenged, affirmed and blessed by teachers and fellow students. VTS has become for me a sanctuary for which I am grateful.

Catherine Ginn, Janet Martin, Heidi Pizzuto, Caitlin Reilley Beck, and Cathy Seguin have offered invaluable assistance, support and advice in moving this project forward. My Bishop and friend John Chapman has been encouraging, generous and patient; marks of yet another friend and Bishop, Peter Coffin. Both have given me space to learn and grow.

Lisa Kimball has served as my thesis advisor. Words are inadequate to express my gratitude to her for the manner with which she has guided, instructed, mentored, and managed me through this process.

It has been a blessing to serve in the parish of Christ Church Bells Corners (CCBC), a community that affords their Rector the time to sit, think, and write. To read through this thesis is to learn that this project was made possible only because of the young people and their parents who participated together in *Lectio Divina* during Lent 2012. The people of CCBC will always be in my heart.

My wife, Diane, is my best friend. Her love is unconditional and beyond telling. We share the joy of three remarkable daughters, Hannah, Mary Grace, and Rachel. The nearness of our household is a sign of God's reign.

Peter John Hobbs, The Third Sunday of Lent, 2013

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*About 40 children and youth sat in a large circle, many of the youngest sitting on the cross-legged laps of teenagers or just leaning close for a cuddle. Most of the 20 or so adults (parents, grandparents and volunteers) stood on the outside, waiting instructions, the circle's disbanding and the scurrying of the young people throughout the church. It had been a great day so far, Palm Saturday! Songs sung, a meal made for a local shelter, and cookies for the fire department next door. Time had been spent in the Chapel on a prayer-walk as the events of Palm Sunday/Holy-Week/Easter were told once again using re-enactment, costumes, drama, and simple narrative. But now in the circle it was time for DEAP (Drop Everything And Pray). For the next 90 minutes all in the Church would be silent, young and old, from toddlers to octogenarians. There would be stations – cards for shut-ins, bead work, spring survival packs for street-people, the Labyrinth, Lego – yet all would be silent. DEAP is a highly anticipated moment on such days, a homegrown spiritual practice that is requested by schoolgirls (“We’re doing DEAP again, right?); and a marvel to first time adults (“I can’t believe they were so good, so quiet, everyone!”). In time, a long time, DEAP would end and the silence gently broken. Members of the Altar Guild having arrived quietly in the final waves of DEAP to help the community once again make palm crosses for the next day.*

#### *What’s the Problem?*

In September 2001, I was appointed the Rector of Christ Church Bells Corners (CCBC), a program sized, multi-staffed parish in the Diocese of Ottawa of the Anglican Church of Canada. At a meeting on my first day on the job I met with the coordinators and teachers – all volunteers – of the Sunday morning church school program and said, “There is no greater priority than nurturing the faith of our children.” In the decade that has followed we have together built on the gifts and heritage of the parish to respond in a faithful and effective way – perhaps even a robust manner - to the challenge of providing a spiritual formation that will sustain young people into adulthood.

Sunday morning programs are augmented with “activity days” offered throughout the year, tied to the themes and stories of the Church Year,<sup>1</sup> such as the one described above. Pageants, like that of a Christmas sort, take place throughout the year and have included Advent, Pentecost, Trinity, and All Hallows’ Eve. We have “grouped” children in grades 3, 4, and 5 beyond regular programming to socialize them into church friendship prior to middle and high school; our Junior Choir includes 15 voices spanning in age from 7 to 18; and our youth embrace the ministry of nursery and altar serving. Youth programming includes social service outreach, Confirmation classes, and social gatherings. Beyond the Sunday Eucharist, the youth have been formed by spiritual practices such as *Lectio Divina*, prayer-walks, use of a Labyrinth, and DEAP. Recently, the youth of CCBC, with support from adult mentors, have discerned a *charism* for hospitality, hosting major events that “wow” the adults.

Our programming does include some segmentation by age that allows for youth events and activities; however, more often our programs are intentionally integrated including children, teens, and adults working, playing and praying together. As Rector, I have made children and youth a priority of my time; partnering with volunteers and staff, including now a paid church school coordinator and often an assistant curate. Also, since 2008, I am the staff person

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<sup>1</sup> These activity days initially drew on the insights of Gretchen Wolff Pritchard, *Offering the Gospel to Children* (Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publication, 1992). In time, as we grew in experience and confidence and following our own creative instincts, we expanded upon, and at times departed from, the learning first gleaned from Wolff Pritchard.

responsible for youth ministry, something I have not done since my days as an assistant curate.<sup>2</sup> This leadership choice has not gone unnoticed.

During my time at CCBC our membership numbers have remained stable at approximately 300 households, despite an older, larger cohort that is passing into glory. The parish has taken seriously issues of social outreach, advocacy, evangelism, hospitality, education, spiritual practice, and formation. Our financial growth has tracked ahead of inflation, though just, and while our younger cohorts are smaller, they are active, generous and enviable relative to other Anglican churches in the region.<sup>3</sup> So, what's the problem?

Despite the number of active youth being laudable and enviable relative to other parishes nearby, it is half of what it was a generation ago when I served as assistant curate in a similar context. CCBC have undertaken strategic efforts around financial stewardship, congregational development, and new member integration that have so far replaced the older cohort at its rate of attrition. Nonetheless, I suspect there is a deeper malaise at play and that CCBC is a fleeting bright spot in the prolonged decline of a mainline denomination that is very much a remnant community. Despite intentional, creative and robust responses on the part of the congregation to the challenges of nurturing faith in young people, I suspect our results are fragile. It is

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<sup>2</sup> I served as Assistant Curate at St Mathias in the west end of Ottawa (not far from CCBC) from 1992 until 1995.

<sup>3</sup> This information pertaining to member, finances, and programs is outlined in detail in a congregational study completed by myself in 2009; Peter John Hobbs, *Christ Church Bells Corners: A Congregational Study* (A Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Ministry Program at Virginia Theological Seminary, 2009).



not clear that the Christian formation of the youth of CCBC is cultivating a life long choice for a sustained Christian journey.

It can be discouraging to be a parish priest in the contemporary Canadian milieu. Financial and membership numbers along with rates of participation in church seem ever to be shifting and in decline. The scope of the challenges can be wide and varied and at times overwhelming. Yet in the midst of the problems Grace and goodness abound. For those so called, we are to be a faithful and effective church in our time, addressing the challenges in ways that are Grace-filled and abiding in hope.

While as a priest of the church I must be mindful of the whole of the ministry entrusted to me, this project thesis addresses one question, one problem in the complexity of ministry. I have been blessed to be the priest to a particular cohort of children who I have watched over a decade move into their teenage years. I have prepared them for Confirmation, trained them to be altar servers, cooked, prayed, and laughed with them. I have with others advocated for, and worked toward, their full integration into the life of the community. I have come to love them and my time with them. I have wondered how these young people will one day lead the church, be engaged in community and ministry. In 30 years will they be there? What more can I do, can the church do, to nurture their faith in a way that will sustain them throughout their lives, in a way that will be a blessing to others in serving the world God loves?

As I reflected on the problem I had discerned, asking what more I could do, the church could do, I began to wonder what role parents play in the faith of their

teenagers. I suspected that not much in the way of spiritual practice and theological reflection was happening in the homes of the teenagers of CCBC. After all, that was the work of the pastor and priest, just as music instruction was the work of the piano teacher and passing on hockey know-how was the job of the coach. Imagining a remnant church in a post-Christian culture, however, I became convinced that the household was essential to the faith formation of children.

### *The Act of Ministry*

Anticipating the thesis project for the completion of the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Virginia Theological Seminary, I embraced it as an opportunity to delve deeply into the question, the problem of faith activities in the home. Central to the thesis requirements is an act of ministry that addresses a particular challenge or problem, hopefully one for which the student is passionate. What would happen if teenagers and parents engaged together at home in a faith activity, a spiritual practice?

*Lectio Divina* is one of a number of spiritual practices that have been introduced into the life of the parish. It is part of adult Christian formation as well as something I have used repeatedly with young people in Confirmation classes and youth activities. It is thus familiar to almost all of the youth and many of their parents.<sup>4</sup> It is a simple practice that is easy to follow, requiring little expertise and is accessible

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was familiar to all participating teenagers.

to people of almost every age. What follows is the pattern of *Lectio Divina* that has been used at CCBC since 2008:<sup>5</sup>

- The facilitator selects a text/passage from Scripture (often from the upcoming Sunday readings).
- Participants sit in silence for approximately one minute.
- The text is read through twice. Each person identifies a word or phrase that reaches out – touches – strikes - him/her
  - Silence is kept for two/three minutes as the word or phrase selected is pondered.
  - After the period of silence, each person is invited to voice the word or short phrase from the passage that stood out for him/her, simply saying the word or phrase without explanation.
- Another person reads the passage through once. Folks are asked to discern how Christ is heard and seen in the passage that day.
  - Silence is kept for two/three minutes
  - After the silence, folks are invited to complete the phrase (or one like it)  
“Today I have seen and heard Christ as ....”
- Another person reads the text. Folks are asked to discern what God is calling them to do or become today or this week.
  - Silence is kept for two/three minutes.
  - After the silence, folks are invited to complete the phrase (or one like it)  
“Today God is calling me to ....”
- Folks are invited to pray silently for the person sitting to their left.
- Time permitting; a time of open discussion can commence.

The act of ministry central to this thesis project is the introduction of *Lectio Divina* into the homes of CCBC whose households include teenagers in high-school. Parents and their teenage children, along with others in the home, were invited during Lent 2012 to engage in *Lectio Divina* together from 1 to 3 times a week. As will be outlined in subsequent chapters, a critical element of this thesis project and my own journey of learning was the determination of a methodology to analyze and interpret this act of ministry. Ultimately, I shaped the research as a qualitative

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<sup>5</sup> A fuller description can be found Appendix H, which is the resource used during the act of ministry.

inquiry using the method of hermeneutic phenomenology. In doing so, I became both narrow and precise in determining the research question. In keeping with both the problem I was addressing and the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, the question at the heart of the Act of Ministry and indeed this thesis is: What is the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents? Throughout this thesis paper, and especially as I explore issues seemingly further afield such as demographics and theological reflection on the nature of God and the church, I will return frequently to this central question.

### *Thesis Statement*

As will be more apparent in Chapter 2, the method of hermeneutic phenomenology in part defies the development of a formal thesis statement with a typical scientific construct. The researcher is called to bracket presuppositions of the phenomenon under study and engage in the exploration without presumption, a kind of blank canvas. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to expect some notion of hypothesis and prediction so long as it is understood as part of the process of bracketing.

Thus, for those teenagers who participated in the *Lectio Divina* with their parents, I predict that they would demonstrate a capacity to talk about their faith and show interest in continued spiritual practice. I expect that teenagers would demonstrate a willingness to discuss matters of faith with their parents, and express some

comfort and even enjoyment in being able to engage in a spiritual practice at home. I would also expect that the act of ministry at the heart of this thesis would provide the parish and myself with ample ideas for the ongoing faith formation of children and youth.

My thesis statement is that as a remnant church in a polarized and fragmented society the Christian formation of youth is fragile, despite a robust and intentional response by congregation and pastor to cultivate a life-long choice for Christian discipleship. Yet the vision abides of young people being able to articulate their faith and spirituality openly, showing interest in continued involvement in spiritual practice and the ministry of the church even when it is a non-conformist choice. An essential, and arguably missing or underdeveloped, element to realizing this vision is an intentional response to Christian formation in the homes of young people; an element that once in place would create a partnership between household, pastor, and congregation. The households of CCBC were invited to engage in a Lenten program in which members participated in *Lectio Divina* 1 to 3 times per week. Those teenagers who participate in *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents will demonstrate a capacity and willingness to talk about their faith, engage in theological reflection, and show more interest in continued spiritual practices.

### *Chapters and Organization of this Thesis*

Chapter 2 sets the thesis and its central act of ministry in the broad context of congregational life as I explore the search for a method through the lens of pastoral

ministry and practical theology. It is the story of the discovery of hermeneutic phenomenology as the most helpful manner for me to engage the qualitative inquiry of the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

Chapter 3 is a survey of the social science that has informed this thesis project. Particular attention is given to religious participation in Canada in terms of both the general population and that of teenagers. As well, the lifestyle and values of contemporary teens and the influential role that parents play in their lives is discussed.

Chapter 4 explores the theological reflection that has guided me through this project. After a brief reflection in the nature of the triune God, a theology of a remnant church is unpacked followed by a theology of the Christian household. In addition, a reflection is offered that returns to themes of practical theology as the partnership between household, congregation and pastor is examined.

Chapter 5 is framed as transitional in that it describes the timelines, procedures and participation of the research study as well as exploring in a semiformal manner some of the insights gained through interviews and survey material garnered from parents whose teenagers participated in the act of ministry. As the research design is explained in detail, a return to issues of qualitative inquiry and methodology provides a context to explain key decisions made during the course of the project.

Chapter 6 is a thorough exploration of the question at the heart of the act of ministry. Using hermeneutic phenomenology, the method is explained and applied

in detail culminating in an exhaustive description of the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a discussion that focuses on reflections recommendations, learnings, and questions. This discussion will incorporate the thesis statement outlined in this chapter at the same time as exploring unanticipated outcomes of the act of ministry.

### *Bringing it Home: Vignettes and Bracketing*

As with this chapter, each subsequent one begins with a vignette (single spaced, italics) that presents in story form something of the life of Christ Church Bells Corners, its congregation, or pastor, or households. These vignettes draw on materials gathered through the interviews conducted for this thesis project as well as on my lived experience of being Rector of Christ Church Bells Corners since September 10, 2001. In addition, the vignettes at the beginning of Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 are written in order to set the context for the act of ministry and the hermeneutic phenomenological study of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. Each of those chapters concludes with a reflection framed in the discipline of bracketing and together with the vignettes finds a place in the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, the search for which I now turn to in Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER 2

### IN SEARCH OF A METHOD: A PASTORS QUEST

*It was just past noon on a Sunday and a dozen youth were gathered in the church lounge, pizza had been eaten, chatter reaching an unnerving volume, and a few parents and adult mentors stood-by ready to get moving. At 6:00 p.m. the doors would be open and the youth would host a spaghetti dinner for over eighty people. Having developed a shared charism of hospitality over many months, the youth with mentors would put their skills to the test on this day. While plans were sketched to develop front of house and back of house teams, tickets had been pre-sold after church for many weeks, and a menu discussed, little was in place and virtually no shopping had been done. Given the pace of family life, the multiple activities of the kids – sports, music lessons, homework, etc. – but for the obvious, it seemed most efficient to do same day planning and implementation. So, six hours to go and so much to do.*

*As the lunch mess was tidied up and flip charts brought out to help get us organized, I grabbed a bible and announced to the kids, “OK guys spread out, it’s carpet time - grab some space or if you want find a chair – let’s go.” The kids broke ranks quickly with some quiet sighs of relief and even a few subdued cheers. Harmony tucked herself into a corner behind a plant, Margaret spread-eagled on the floor at the end of the board table, Judith curled up by a baseboard, Elizabeth reclined back in a chair, Michael lay flat on his stomach under the table – all were quiet, all were ready. The adults looked at me with a strange askance, not sure what was happening. There was so much to do. We would begin the process with Lectio Divina, ground ourselves in God’s presence, listening to the Word through an ancient spiritual practice.*

*For the youth, this was old hat. It had been part of Confirmation class, a frequent element of our Youth Gatherings, and times of prolonged silence had been a part of children formation programs for years in the parish. For the teens, Lectio Divina was welcome and not unexpected. The pericope selected was the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42 NRSV). The handful of adults present quickly resigned themselves to the spiritual practice that had so quickly landed in the room, though a few jitters of impatience stirred, no one dared challenge the priest who called the youth to prayer.*

*Over the next nine hours the pace would be feverish as shopping, cooking, decorating, serving, selling and cleaning rolled through the parish facility. Kids would come and go depending on hockey practice, dance lessons, or parental concern (twelve hours at church is a lot), though almost all would commit to the task at hand; a moment of cross-generational hospitality for the parish as toddlers through seniors gathered. In the end, over \$3, 500 was raised for a local agency working with street involved people with which the parish enjoys a close partnership. “The kids,” it was said again and again, “were amazing” and we were all exhausted leaving the church into the night; relationships further forged, community a little bit stronger, and kids that much more at home in their church. The few moments of stillness, scripture, and meditation that was Lectio Divina seemed fleeting in it all.*



I come to my work and my studies as a pastor. In any given week I can find myself sitting with people in moments of great sorrow or great joy, taking Communion to those who are house-bound, on my hands and knees playing with pre-schoolers, anointing the sick, sitting around a board table with smart people thinking strategically about the organization, presiding at celebrations of the Eucharist, studying scripture to prepare and deliver homilies, providing input to facilities management, working with local partners to help address concrete needs in the community, teaching classes, fielding inquires about baptism and marriage, managing staff and volunteers, journeying with someone to their death, asking people to give money to the church, and rolling up my sleeves to accompany teenagers in a moment of hospitality. At the end of any given week, I can look back and think to myself, "That was fascinating."

To be a pastor – a priest and teacher – in a congregational context is a layered reality in which one is called upon to hold a number of complex issues and activities in balance. A challenge in the midst of the multi-tasking and the demand for a number of core competencies is that it can seem a luxury to delve deeply into the specifics of one element of ministry – to do so may prove detrimental to the whole. Yet, from time-to-time issues, problems or challenges arise born of the lived experience of ministry. The vignette above is one such experience, among many pertaining to children and youth, which highlights the question at the heart of this thesis. While youth of the parish seem comfortable engaging in spiritual practices with me at church, I wondered if anything was taking place at home, in their households with their parents. As outlined in the introduction, I began to suspect

that despite intentional and creative efforts in faith formation within the parish, the results were fragile and may not take hold. The temptation has always been to do more and try harder within the programs of the parish – more youth gatherings, more outreach, and more spiritual practices. The experience of the Spaghetti Dinner moment brought into focus a problem I had not deeply considered; namely, the faith formation in households within the relationship of teens and parents. Some parents would attend *Lectio Divina* in the parish when it was offered. The teens seem to do so gladly when at church. Yet, what about home, was it a shared experience? What would happen if they did do *Lectio Divina* together at home? So, in this thesis I ask a very specific question regarding the essence of participating youth in doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. I ask the question as a pastor within the complexity of my job and at the same time with a specific, narrow focus on one element in one area of my vocation as a congregational leader. The challenge is two-fold: first, is holding the research question – the essence of doing *Lectio Divina* at home - within the much larger context of congregational ministry and societal reality; second, is holding firm to the specificity of the question at hand using a methodology that fits the framework of the project and my own inclination and skills as a researcher and a pastor.

The notion of a thesis project centred on teens and parents doing *Lectio Divina* at home began to take shape long before I discovered a method that would allow me to meet the two-fold challenge I had identified. And so I began a search for a method, a search that admittedly was taken even as the project was being designed, that would lead to the discovery of hermeneutic phenomenology. It was a search, the lived

experience of which would inform and focus my research question at the same time as enriching my own understanding of methodology and research in general. In and of itself, the search for a method became an essential element of this thesis project, one that will continue to inform my ministry for many years to come.

Along the way, I drew heavily on the insights of practical theologian Richard Osmer and pastoral theologian Carrie Doehring, both of whom provide useful frameworks to consider the specificity of my question in the larger context of ministry. In this chapter, then, I explore and explicate the dual process. The first is setting my work within the larger context of pastoral practice and practical theology as a congregational leader. The second is the nagging question that from the inception of this project led me on a search for a method that would best serve this thesis and the ministry context in which I serve, ultimately leading me to the use of hermeneutic phenomenology.

### *The Challenge of Pastoral Practice and Usefulness of Frameworks*

It often comes as a surprise to those who enter pastoral ministry in a congregational setting that it is in fact so demanding and multi-dimensional. Seminary formation may provide education and training in select areas such as systematic theology, biblical studies, homiletics, ethics, liturgy, Christian education, pastoral care, and a smattering of leadership and administrative theory. Yet, little it seems can prepare for the breadth of experience that is being a pastor, priest, and teacher in a parish church. This near universal experience has had a hearty

response by practitioners, academics, judicatories, and seminaries in a concerted if not integrated effort to provide relevant formation, continuing education, and many resources to assist pastors in their ongoing development. From leadership and administration to change management and conflict resolution, from family systems theory to congregational development resources, from specific skill acquisition to re-thinking the whole of parish ministry; the material and human capital invested in the development of faithful and effective clerical and pastoral professionals is voluminous.<sup>1</sup> My own experience was one in which the daunting realization of not being ready to do the job to which I was called was softened by a handful of gracious mentors and a near obsessive commitment to degree based continuing education. Along the way mistakes were made and anxiety was marked by sleepless nights. Though maturity, learning, spiritual growth and plenty of experience have allowed for a greater calm and confidence in living into my pastoral work, I am ever mindful of the balance I must seek and the mistakes still wrought. Ultimately, by Grace, I have found joy and blessing as a pastor.

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<sup>1</sup> What follows is only a brief sampling of the books available to congregational leaders, all these were taken at a glance directly from my personal library – the titles themselves prove telling: Nancy T. Ammerman et al, ed., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998); Arthur Paul Boers, *Never Call them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999); Kennon L. Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strong, Healthy Congregation Living in the Grace of God*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010); Norma Cook Everist and Craig L. Nesson, *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008); Justin Lewis-Anthony, *If You Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him: Radically Re-Thinking Priestly Ministry* (London: Mowbray, 2009); Ronald W. Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family*, Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005); Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership In Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006).

This in no small way has been enabled by the integrated and ongoing exercise of placing my vocational experience within a series of analytical frameworks, ones that have continued to evolve and grow in changing contexts and particular situations. Often these frames come into focus by way of the insights of others, affirming my own practices and helping to crystallize my analysis. Carrie Doehring provides one such frame in her development of a trifocal lens in a postmodern approach to pastoral care that incorporates much more than the current epoch:

In using a trifocal lens to shift among premodern, modern, and postmodern approaches to knowledge, pastoral caregivers draw upon all of the historical and contemporary resources of their religious, intellectual, and cultural traditions. Their premodern lens gives them access to the long and rich history of religious traditions in ancient and medieval historical periods. Using a modern lens, they draw upon the vast knowledge generated by rational and scientific methods, notably biblical critical methods, systematic modern theologies, and medical and social science theories about human experience. A postmodern lens brings into focus the contextual, provisional nature of knowledge and how knowledge is socially constructed, particularly through systems of power and privilege.<sup>2</sup>

While Doehring's trifocal lens is developed in the context of pastoral care, often with a more clinical perspective, it has broader application throughout congregational ministry. For example, preaching requires engagement with an ancient text set within a historical, traditional liturgy (premodern), the preparation of which explores a broad base of scholarly criticism (modern) with direct relevance to the given circumstances of a particular community (postmodern). Much of pastoral and priestly ministry – given its many sacramental rites, practices grounded in social science, and concern for the distinctiveness of local contexts and personal experience – is a constant ebb and flow within the Doehring's framework.

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<sup>2</sup> Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Post Modern Approach* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 5-6.

In fact, the project upon which this thesis is based can be viewed from the perspective of this trifocal lens. Concern for faith formation of youth informed by data, theories, and studies (see subsequent chapters) in areas such as spiritual development, rates of participation, and church decline point to the contributions of the modern perspective. The use of a spiritual practice, *Lectio Divina*, that finds a place in antiquity and that engages an ancient and sacred text of a religious tradition brings an element of premodernity into the present context. My own reflections as a pastor, priest, and teacher within a very specific milieu and, more importantly, striving to discover the essence of the experience of parish youth doing *Lectio Divina* at home with parents gives the project an element of the postmodern.

Be it as a pastor and priest or as a student and researcher, I am compelled to be mindful of the frames of reference that govern my experience, practice, and analysis and through a process of self-examination and disclosure to articulate such perspectives. Whether such frameworks be deemed as, or point to, presuppositions, prejudices, or ideologies, they are embodied and subjectively impact my work and life. Thus, implicitly or explicitly, the trifocal lens of premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity will be apparent throughout this thesis – both shaping my perspective and informing my analysis.

### *Practical Theology in the Exercise of Praxis*

This thesis finds its place in the larger enterprise of practical theology, a discipline for which, not surprisingly, there exists debate regarding its definition and

parameters.<sup>3</sup> Practical theology may be set over-against more traditional forms such as systematic theology, biblical criticism, and church history. Thus, it claims to be an inter-disciplinary approach that integrates more applied or grounded sub-disciplines that have explicit expressions, for example in congregational life, such as homiletics, pastoral care, Christian formation, and – yes – far more specifically, youth ministry. Such a claim may well do disservice to the traditional disciplines of theology inferring that they do not have practical application or the capacity to shape lived experience, and it is entirely possible that any discipline of the seminary can be disconnected from the practical, lived realities of the sanctuary or street.

I would again assert that I come to this work as a pastor and, though not wanting to be dismissive of the debate surrounding its definition, my engagement with practical theology comes first and foremost in its doing. From experience as a priest and pastor being informed by the schools of theology, the exercise, if not definition, of practical theology from my perspective involves the following key ingredients: a specific lived experience or context (e.g. communities of faith); the application, and possible integration of one or more, of the sub-disciplines of theology; an openness to the contributions and practices of social/human sciences; a process of reflection,

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Sung Kyu Park, "A Postfoundationalist Research Paradigm of Practical Theology." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 66, no. 2 (2010), Art. #849, 6 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v66i2.849>, (accessed August 17, 2012); Tobias H. Steyn and Maake J. Masango, "The Theology and Praxis of Practical Theology in the Context of the Faculty of Theology," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 67, no. 2(2011), Art # 956, 7 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i2.956> (accessed August 30, 2012); Tony Edina, "What is Practical Theology? Part I," *Theoblogy: Emerging Church, Missional Life, Practical Theology, Rants*, entry posted February 23, 2005, <http://theoblogy.blogspot.ca/2005/02/what-is-practical-theology-part-i.html> (accessed August 17, 2012).

analysis and interpretation given the experience and context in light of the insights gained through theology and social/human sciences; and conclusions that have practical application whether through recommendations or praxis. In reality, especially in the throes of congregational life, these elements are seldom lived out in a linear, systematic fashion, guided by technique and mastery. Far more often practical theology is lived out in intricate, interconnected systems and actions of human relationship that hold together intentionality and happen-stance, excellence and mediocrity, abiding, reflective wisdom and quick, pithy insights born of an age of social media. Thus, those who reflect rigorously on practical theology prove a blessing on those of us who spend most of our time in the intricate living systems of congregations. There is a call to pastors and congregations to be cognizant of the insights of theology, social/human science, and the usefulness of frameworks.

As a practical theologian, and in keeping with my own predilections for praxis, Richard Osmer provides not so much a definition as a delineation of the core tasks of practical theological interpretation as follows:

- *The descriptive-task.* Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situation, or contexts.
- *The interpretive task.* Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.
- *The normative task.* Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from good practice.
- *The pragmatic task.* Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the “talk back” emerging when they are enacted.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company), 4.



Or as Osmer himself more simply puts the tasks:

What is going on?  
Why is it going on?  
What ought to be going on?  
How might we respond?<sup>5</sup>

Framed in these four simple, colloquial questions, Osmer has captured at least in part the essence of much of my own work as a pastoral leader seeking to provide oversight within congregational life. At any given time, on any number of issues, like most pastors, I am faced with situations that are sub-optimal or at a point in time when evaluation of current ministries and programs is in order. Once engaged in such an exercise a congregation and its leadership is in the throes of doing practical theology regardless of whether framing questions are implicitly or explicitly operative. When implicit there is of course the risk that key components will be missed and rigour will be compromised. Yet, clearly, every situation or problem does not require a committee, task force, or well-defined analytical framework. Consider for example, the vignette that began this chapter:

*What is going on?* I observed a great deal of energy and activity for a youth led event that would be cross-generational in nature, though perhaps with little if any reference to spiritual practice or theological reflection.

*Why is it going on?* No real surprise: there was significant pressure to produce a great meal in a short amount of time. *Lectio Divina* would not be foremost in people's minds; our busy suburban lives seldom include spiritual practice apart from Sunday worship or perhaps a brief prayer before and after a church meeting.

*What ought to be going on?* As a pastor I am mindful that I abide in a tradition that calls people to pray, worship, and engage scripture such that it is integrated with all of life, as much in the parish church as in the Christian household. Even in the midst of such a hectic, long day in which the Holy Spirit will be at work in all we do, taking some time for stillness, reflection, prayer, and scripture is normative for our

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

tradition and will be one element in the spiritual formation of the youth involved. It ought to be an experience shared across generations.

*How might we respond?* *Lectio Divina* is familiar to the youth. It need not take very long or even require much planning. As the pastoral leader I am able to facilitate and invite all present into a time of prayer and meditation; doing so will not compromise the rest of the day, rather will enhance it and ground it in a theology of service and hospitality. Yet, once the day is over, finding ways to connect parents (and other adults) and teenagers in spiritual practice would be a good response.

Clearly introducing *Lectio Divina* into the Spaghetti Dinner day did not require great effort or collaborative strategic thinking, and admittedly, the above analysis was done in retrospect of the event. Yet, that is precisely the point. Pastors are, or at least ought to be, living out practical theology as they encounter life in their faith communities. More often than not this will be done implicitly as a matter of course as the questions Osmer frames, or ones like them, become embodied in the lived experience of a pastor, perhaps not surfacing until the contributions of practical theologians are encountered. As has been the case in my years of pastoral ministry, from time-to-time, the process ought to be more explicit, collaborative, and rigorous and will often be part of strategic planning, program evaluation, or a congregational study; and I might add with some haste, conducting a project thesis. Yet, at the same time, applying Osmer's four tasks to the vignette at the beginning of this chapter illuminated a "problem" that has become the force of this thesis project. While it is essential when using a framework, for example, such as the one articulated by Osmer, to be even handed in applying all four tasks of practical theology, at different times, given the exercise at hand, one task may prove more challenging, requiring more attention, than that of the others. In the case of this project thesis, the challenge faced was in addressing the methodology within

Osmer's descriptive-empirical task. That is, determining the best social/human science approach to get at the essence of the lived experience of youth doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

*The Art of Listening and Confessions of a Pastor at Learning*

Osmer sets the descriptive-empirical task within the context of Priestly listening in which "practical theological interpretation is grounded in the spirituality of presence. It is a matter of attending to what is going on in the lives of individuals, families, and communities." <sup>6</sup> As a practical theologian, a pastor, priest and teacher is integrated into the life of a congregation such that the task of listening/attending falls within a broad spectrum of engagement and analysis. Osmer describes this spectrum as a Continuum of Attending that includes Informal Attending, Semiformal Attending, and Formal Attending.<sup>7</sup> Informal Attending is the ebb and flow of day-to-day life, listening and responding to the lives of others, the joys, struggles, playfulness and work. It is the receiving of feedback and insight from others as we go about busy days, praying in the midst of it all that we are attending to the wisdom offered. It is a priestly listening of great privilege in which pastors are invited into the lives of people in ways and at times that rare for those entrusted with vocations and professions of service and caring. Semiformal Attending includes such practices as journaling, peer relationships intentionally providing support and accountability,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 37-39.

and small groups check-ins. Formal Attending moves practical theology into the realm of social/human science methods and “is the investigating of particular episodes, situations, and contexts through empirical research.”<sup>8</sup>

Formal Attending will often begin with secondary research in which the insights of professional scholars aid congregations in making sense of their context. Yet, from time-to-time as a congregational leader, almost always working collaboratively in teams, I have engaged in Formal Attending that is more of a primary nature, though unaware of its place in practical theology, generally, or Osmer’s framework, specifically. Over 20 years of ordained ministry, I have with others made use of such tools as surveys, focus groups, case studies, town hall meetings, and interviews. The information gathered from these research methods would be collated, analyzed and quickly put into the strategic cycles of visioning, planning, ministry development, and program evaluation. While care would be taken and skilled individuals were involved, seldom would the methods used incorporate formal and explicit research designs, a process called for by Osmer.<sup>9</sup>

An exception to this was the completion of a congregational study during my first year as a student in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Virginia Theological Seminary,<sup>10</sup> though still I worked without a clear sense of the nuances and intricacies of the various quantitative and qualitative methods at work in social/human science research. In retrospect, being very much the novice at the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 47-63.

<sup>10</sup> Hobbs, *Christ Church Bells Corners: A Congregational Study*, 2009.

time, I would describe the congregational study as using a mixed method, garnering insight from both quantitative and qualitative methods while using both secondary and primary sources. Surveys, interviews, historical timelines, statistical analysis, and focus groups were all used and the fruits of the congregational study guided important initiatives in ministry in the years that followed. Alas, it followed very much the pattern of previous Formal Attending in the continuum of priestly listening: that is, it was far more rigorous and intentional than informal and even semiformal attending and it was integrated into a larger frame of practical theology that ultimately moved forward to pragmatic tasks grounded in theological reflection. Nonetheless, it lacked the precision and rigour required of the Formal Attending called for in the priestly listening at the heart of a thesis project completed for a Doctor of Ministry.

From the outset of this project lies my concern as a pastor for the spirituality of the relatively small number of youth in my care. I assumed that, despite intentional efforts in parish programming, not much of faith, insight or a burgeoning life-long commitment to Christianity was at hand or even discernable. I questioned whether the youth spoke about their faith or even had the capacity to do so. I further assumed that very little faith formation was taking place in the homes of the youth and felt intuitively, supported by literature, that this was a missing ingredient. I wondered what would happen if a spiritual practice such as *Lectio Divina* was introduced into the homes of parishioners with high school students. What would happen? Would it make a difference? Would there be a marked change? What

would the experience be like for the teenagers, their parents? Yet, how could it be measured? What tools could I use?

Admittedly, though enthusiastic, like a keen pastor with a fresh idea and some energy, I began to design a project without much attention to precision and rigour. I would make use of online surveys, focus groups, interviews with the youth and parents before and after – pre-test and post-test – the Lenten *Lectio Divina* experience in the home. The more tools considered for gathering data, the more the questions spiraled such that the exactness of the question being posed seemed at times to be further from my grasp. I wanted to know what would happen if teenagers read the scripture and prayed with their parents at home. It seemed simple enough, yet without the framework of a defined method I floundered. This confession, this admission, is critical to this project as well to my own development as a practical theologian. Grappling with the essence of the question being asked in the wake of years of ministry in which formal attending, though practiced from time-to-time, never extended to the extreme of the continuum of priestly listening. Thus, as a pastor I have often made assumptions without testing them thoroughly. For sure any pastor, myself included, can be forgiven such a lapse, not even in the formal attending of Osmer's frame would such rigour be expected at all times. Yet the call of the project thesis and desire to authentically listen to the youth in my care sent me on a search.

### *Zeroing in on a Method*

Initially, I identified established, reliable, and verifiable survey tools that could be utilized as pre-test and post-test instruments. The first survey is the “Daily Spiritual Experience Scale” (DSES) developed by Lynn Underwood.<sup>11</sup> David Dollahite and Nathaniel Lambert developed the second survey, the Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS).<sup>12</sup> Both these surveys pose questions that are aligned with elements of this thesis project and provide information helpful to its findings; however, the short duration of the study does not allow for a longitudinal study that measures change over time. Furthermore, despite the soundness of the surveys, they do not address the specificity of the project regarding the experience of youth doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. Thus, the survey results provide information and a “snap shot” in time of the project participants and is used only sparingly during the course of the paper in dialogue with the context in which the youth and their parents live (see Chapter 5 below).

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<sup>11</sup> © Lynn G. Underwood: Underwood, L.G. (2006) Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Qualitative Research, Interpretive Guidelines, and Population Distribution for the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 28:1, 181-218. Cited as prescribed by author when granting permission.

<sup>12</sup> David C. Dollahite and Nathaniel Lambert, Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS), Used with Permission. See also, David Dollahite and Nathaniel Lambert, “Development of the Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS),” *Journal of Family Issues* 20 (10), 1-23. © The Author(s) 2010, Reprints and permission:<http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>, DOI:10.1177/0192513X10363798,<http://jfi.sagepub.com>(accessed November 23, 2011).

Ultimately, as does much of formal attending of practical theology, this project is designed as a qualitative research study as opposed to that of a quantitative study.

As Osmer explains:

Quantitative research gathers and analyzes numeric data to explore relationships between variables. Qualitative research seeks to understand the actions and practices in which individuals and groups engage in everyday life and meanings they ascribe to their experience. Quantitative research is especially helpful in discovering broad statistical patterns and relationships. Qualitative research is better suited to studying a small group of individuals, groups, or communities in depth.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly this thesis project focuses on everyday life, meaning, experience, individuals, small groups, and a community. Statistical patterns, numeric data, and variables are not the subject of examination, notwithstanding the information garnered from the surveys discussed above and the demographics outlined in the next chapter. Even within the context of qualitative research a number of methods of inquiry exist such as ethnography, narrative, grounded theory, and arts informed inquiry.<sup>14</sup> A significant component to the formation of this thesis was the process of reviewing, discussing, and reflecting upon these various qualitative methods and their appropriateness for the project.

In the spirit of confession in the previous section, sometime after the approval of the thesis proposal, though before the implementation of the project, I continued to

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<sup>13</sup> Osmer, 49-50.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 50-53. Osmer provides a brief description of qualitative research methods. For a much comprehensive description see: John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007). For another description that includes a detailed look at various Arts Based inquiry see: Lynn Butler-Kisber. *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative, and Arts Informed Perspectives* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2010).



struggle with the question of methodology.<sup>15</sup> At a particular point during my review, I discovered the notion of emergent design, an accepted characteristic of qualitative research outlined by John Creswell in which “the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data. For example, the questions may change, the forms of data collection may shift, and the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed! The design of the project would be emergent and yet in time would find a defined frame within the qualitative research method of hermeneutic phenomenology. While the term itself may beg many questions for an inquirer, one that I will address throughout this paper, in practical terms, hermeneutic phenomenology worked well with the project, especially given the characteristic of emergent design. What follows is a brief description of key elements followed in hermeneutic phenomenology that made it particularly compelling to me in the early stages of my search for a method (Chapter 6 provides a full description of the method as applied by me in the study).

Hermeneutic phenomenology involves:

- A small purposal sample of participants all of whom share a particular phenomenon, an experience; for example, teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.
- Using open-ended questions to interview 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon on 1 or more occasions. As well, documents such as written descriptions may also, along with the interview transcripts, comprise the field texts.

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<sup>15</sup> During this time I was often in frequent conversation with my adviser, Lisa Kimball, to whom I am very thankful for her wisdom, patience, and guidance.

<sup>16</sup> Creswell, 39.

- Reviewing the field texts to extract and organize from them a series of significant statements.
- Interpreting the statements in the development of an exhaustive description of the essence of the experience.<sup>17</sup>

These steps as outlined here belie the complexity and conceptual assumptions at the heart of hermeneutical phenomenology, which should first be addressed before moving to subsequent chapters.

### *The Priest and Pastor as Phenomenologist*

Commentators on the use of phenomenology in qualitative research consistently claim that the researcher must first acknowledge its antecedents in philosophy beginning with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and further developed by philosophers such as Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger, and Jean Paul Sartre.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the researcher must be mindful of the steps followed in the design of the research project, however emergent it may be. As a newcomer to the method, I reviewed a number of texts in order to gain a suitable orientation within both the philosophy and methodology at play in hermeneutic phenomenology. What follows are key points that have formed and guided my work in this project.

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<sup>17</sup> Those the steps as used specifically for this thesis project will be outlined in detail in Chapter 6 below, overviews of the phenomenological methodology can be found in Creswell, 60-62, 78-79, 120-121; and Butler Kisber, 53-54.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2009), 11-12; See also, Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, Suny Series in the Philosophy of Education, ed. P.L Smith (Albany, NY: Suny Press, 1990), 7; and, Creswell, 59.

First, hermeneutic phenomenology as a qualitative research method has its roots in philosophy rather than in empirical science. Phenomenology focuses on experience of reality as being grounded in consciousness and thus reality is largely perceived through everyday lived experience. Thus, the essence of “the thing,” the phenomenon, lies in the intentional encounter of it within the intricate web of an individual’s lived experience. As phenomenology developed so too did an understanding of the person as embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns. In this way, phenomenology finds a place within the worldview of social constructivism. Lynn Butler-Kisber explains and makes the link to research:

Social constructivism is predicated on the idea that lived experience is socially constructed, understood in context, and influenced by the historical and cultural experiences known to individuals. Social constructivist researchers situate themselves in their work, use open-ended questions, emergent analysis and develop close relationships with participants in order to explain in great detail the particular experience or phenomenon under study.<sup>19</sup>

So, the phenomenologist as researcher is interested in the perception of reality as the essence of “a thing” is experienced within the intricate web of everyday life. Max Van Manen, an educator, who has written extensively about hermeneutic phenomenology, puts it this way:

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to *know* the world is profoundly to *be* in the world in a certain way, the act of researching – questioning – theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to *become* the world. Phenomenology calls this inseparable connection to the world the principle of

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<sup>19</sup> Butler-Kisber, 5.

“intentionality.” In doing research we question the world’s very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us. This research is a caring act: we want to know that which is most essential to being. To care is to serve and to share our being with the one we love.<sup>20</sup>

Van Manen integrates the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and explicitly surfaces a research, in his words, of care, service, and love. The research is engaged in an intimate questioning of the world in an intentionality of perceiving and knowing the essence of a phenomenon. Like so much of my work, in reviewing phenomenology I discovered a frame that has been intuitively operative in my experience as a pastor. I am neither a clinician, nor a counselor. I have engaged my work with people very often interested in the questions they pose in life and, in my own way, offering questions myself of them in the things they experience – be they dying or giving birth, making communion or discovering community, praying, or playing. The phenomenological world view offers a lens from which I can consider all my priestly listening within the continuum of informal to formal attending; not the least of which is the exercise of this thesis.

A second key point lies with the explicitly interpretive nature of hermeneutic phenomenology. From the outset, phenomenology has been concerned with the description of the essence of lived experience. Such description, in order to get at the essence, would require a bracketing, or setting aside, of all prior knowledge in order to focus solely on the phenomenon examined. In so doing, the phenomenologist provides a description, rather than an interpretation, of the phenomenon. This notion of bracketing has proved controversial throughout the

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<sup>20</sup> Max Van Manen, , 5.

history of phenomenology from both the perspective of philosophers and human science researchers.<sup>21</sup> Essentially, the argument follows, is not the action of describing inherently interpretive regardless of how authentic, strident, and transparent the process of bracketing? Hermeneutic phenomenology thus explicitly embraces the interpretive element of the phenomenological enterprise. Van Manen explains:

Applied to the quality of a human science research text, we may say that phenomenological text is descriptive in the sense that it names something. And in this naming it points to something and it aims at letting something show itself. And phenomenological text is interpretive in the sense that it mediates. ... It mediates between interpreted meanings and the thing toward which the interpretations point.<sup>22</sup>

Van Manen makes the helpful distinction that phenomenology “describes how one orients to the lived world, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the “texts” of life ...”<sup>23</sup> Butler-Kisber offers that hermeneutic phenomenology moves “beyond description to interpretation where the researcher actively takes a role in explaining participant meanings.”<sup>24</sup> Drawing directly on the work of Van Manen, Creswell offers the following succinct summary of the interpretive quality of hermeneutic phenomenology within the context of qualitative research:

Researchers first turn to a phenomenon, ... which seriously interests them. ... In the process, they reflect on essential themes, what constitutes the nature of this lived experience. They write a description of the phenomenon,

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<sup>21</sup> Creswell, 58-60; Van Manen, 24-27; Butler-Kisber, 51; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 12-15.

<sup>22</sup> Van Manen, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>24</sup> Butler-Kisber, 51.

maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of the writing to the whole. Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation ... of the meaning of the lived experience.<sup>25</sup>

The researcher, the phenomenologist, is engaged in a dynamic process of curiosity, interest, reflection, inquiry, analysis, interpretation and writing. Coupled then with a mindfulness to Van Manen's attentiveness to care and affection for participants and for the phenomenon examined, hermeneutic phenomenology begins for me to integrate the thoughtfulness, complexity and passion of being a pastor. Osmer in developing his framework for practical theology takes pause to consider the hermeneutical element of pastors and uses the term "interpretive guides" to explore the ongoing role of congregational leaders as interpreters of lived experience.<sup>26</sup> As a pastor, priest, teacher and preacher, I have been engaged in an ongoing, weekly hermeneutical quest as I strive to interpret, through a trifocal lens, an ancient premodern tradition in light of the breadth of modernity and the fragmentation of postmodernity. The further I explored the tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology the more I surfaced in retrospect elements of my role as pastor over many years at the same time as discovering a method to employ in researching the lived experience of youth who engage in *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

A third key aspect is to expand briefly on the concept of bracketing, especially given the interpretive element of hermeneutic phenomenology. It would seem obvious that in order to be attentive and to listen – to examine and explore the

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<sup>25</sup> Creswell, 59.

<sup>26</sup> Osmer, 18-15.

essence of a lived experience, either as pastor or researcher – there needs to be a “setting aside,” a bracketing of presuppositions, assumptions, and prior knowledge. Arriving at the essence of an phenomenon, however interpreted it may be in the end, begs for a blank canvas so that the researchers can pose questions not laden with expectations but open to new insights, even surprise. Yet, just as clear is the tenet that the human being in being cannot simply forget – temporarily for utility – the stuff of social construction (language, culture, context, ideology) that has been embodied in accumulated lived experience. Thus, a dynamic tension exists between the need to bracket or set aside and the near impossibility of doing so, if understood in its extreme terms. Therefore Creswell suggests a new definition of bracketing “such as suspending our understanding in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity ... Thus, the researcher needs to decide how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced to the study.”<sup>27</sup> Within the broader context of qualitative inquiry, Butler-Kisber echoes a similar view: “What needs to be accounted for and interrogated ... is what perspectives are brought to the work and why we see things the way we do. In qualitative inquiry, no apologies are needed for identity, assumptions, and biases, just a rigorous accounting of them.”<sup>28</sup>

Creswell and Butler-Kisber strike a chord that resonates. Critical to hermeneutic phenomenology is the need to suspend judgment regarding participant’s lived experience of a phenomenon. Bracketing points to the rigorous demands of such a process as well as the philosophical challenges of the concept. Yet, when understood

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<sup>27</sup> Creswell, 62.

<sup>28</sup> Butler-Kisber, 19.

in the manner presented by Creswell as well as Butler-Kisber it is a process of openness, authenticity and honesty in which the phenomenologist, as pastor or researcher in my case, must articulate the manner with which such judgment is suspended. Part of that process is in the personal reflection and self-examination that is then articulated in the written text of the research. Thus, this chapter is in no small way a part of the bracketing for the hermeneutic phenomenological research at the core of this thesis. In addition, the following two chapters discussing the social science and theological reflection informing this thesis are, in the context of hermeneutic phenomenology, a key part of the process of bracketing. While these chapters will outline my reflection and reading regarding critical issues surrounding, for example, youth, the church, pastoral leadership, and my own personal assumptions, the process of naming such issues enables them to be set aside, as much as is possible, when engaging the lived experience of the youth participating in *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. And as the interpretive element of the hermeneutic phenomenological process culminates both the reader and the phenomenologist – the interpretive guide, myself – can determine the extent to which the interpretation is influenced by my own assumptions and analytical lens' as a pastor and researcher.

A fourth and final consideration involves a caution regarding the expectations that can be brought to bear on social/human science, be they quantitative or qualitative, and the uniqueness of hermeneutic phenomenology research within this broad context. Van Manen is consistently insistent on making this distinction and articulating the purpose and insight available through hermeneutic phenomenology:



Phenomenological human science is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness. In this focus upon meaning, phenomenology differs from some other social sciences which may focus not on meanings but on statistical relationships among variables, on the predominance of social options, or on the occurrence or frequency of certain behaviors, etc. And phenomenology differs from other disciplines in that it does not aim to explicate meaning specific to particular cultures (ethnography), or certain social groups (sociology), to historical periods (history) or mental types (psychology), or to an individual's personal life (biography). Rather, phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our life world.<sup>29</sup>

As this thesis unfolds in subsequent chapters, it will be apparent that structured research design has been employed, one consistent with tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology. In that specific steps and procedures are followed and explained leading ultimately to an exhaustive description of the phenomenon of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents, the project being studied can be described as rigorous in the social/human scientific sense of the word. Yet, because of the central focus of meaning and interpretation grounded in philosophy, phenomenological hermeneutics is also rigorous in being “prepared to be ‘soft,’ ‘subtle,’ and ‘sensitive’ in its effort to bring a range of meanings of life’s phenomena, to our reflective awareness.”<sup>30</sup> While phenomenology has provided insights in the practice of such fields as nursing, psychology, education,<sup>31</sup> as Van Manen emphatically argues, “when you listen to a presentation of a phenomenological nature, you will listen in vain for the punch-line, the latest information, or the big

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<sup>29</sup> Van Manen, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>31</sup> See: Smith, Flower, Larkin, 121-162; Creswell, 265-283; Butler-Kisber, 54-59.

news.”<sup>32</sup> Grounded in the every day essence of a phenomenon, interpreted sensitively by a curious and caring researcher, a hermeneutic phenomenological text abides in the intricate web of reality and lived experience. It makes no claim to radical breakthroughs, resists the notion of a quick fix, and modestly holds up for consideration its offerings. Again from Van Manen: “To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal.”<sup>33</sup> For the researcher, the practitioner, the fruits of hermeneutic phenomenology are such as to give pause to the essence of experience in an area of deep and abiding concern “with the intent to increase one’s thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness or tact.”<sup>34</sup>

In the final pages of this chapter I have relied significantly on Max Van Manen whose writing on hermeneutic phenomenology has guided much of my thought on the subject. One final insight from Van Manen proves illustrative of this chapter when he writes: “Practice (or life) always comes first and theory comes later as a result of reflection.”<sup>35</sup> Practice before theory has most definitely been my experience as a pastor and priest, especially in matters of practical theology, congregational development, and youth ministry. This was true of Doehring’s trifocal lens of

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<sup>32</sup> Van Manen, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 15.

postmodern pastoral care and of Osmer's framework of practical theology. Both writers, no doubt born of their own practice and reflection, provide theories that help me make sense of my practice of ministry. In my search for a method that led to hermeneutic phenomenology, I also discovered a theory that gave shape to how I engaged in ministry, yet also how I viewed the world. I have been deeply curious about the lives of people and the shared faith of the Church as I have carried on the practice of ministry and along the way I have discovered an intricate and complex web of relationships. Certainly hermeneutic phenomenology is only one way in which to research the essence of my pastoral practice, yet it provides a method and theory that makes sense of the whole at the same time as I rigorously explore the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. Hopefully, I will discover something of the particular that enables me to move forward with thoughtfulness, resourcefulness and tact not only for the whole, but also for the youth entrusted to my care.

## CHAPTER 3

### SOCIAL SCIENCE INFORMING THIS PROJECT

*Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.  
Let us sing this song, no one stands alone  
Standing side-by-side, draw the circle wide.<sup>1</sup>*

*This catchy chorus of a folk hymn, written by a Canadian priest, now a Bishop, is sung almost quarterly at Christ Church Bells Corners. One Sunday, surrounded by youth servers (acolytes) in the sanctuary I looked up and to my surprise, the robed teenagers had created, and were doing, actions to the song. A glance into the nave and I saw other kids doing the actions as well, with even a few moms joining in – smiles all around. The actions were being led by the crucifer, Judith, an active, studious teenager who is regularly in church, several times a month, though claims not to pray at home with her parents, except before special meals. Cross-country skiing, cross-country running, folk dancing, school band, church choir, altar serving, church nursery, and straight As – Judith is busy and plugged in, cell phone in her back pocket and a facebook page. She feels close to God at church, especially in the silence before the confession, late at night as she goes off to sleep, and at times when she is in the wilderness, most often with her parents – a quiet shared feeling that is not discussed. At school within a small group of friends, Judith is the only one who goes to church (at least she thinks so, because no one talks about it), though some of her closest friends over the years have been Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim. Youth activities at church are marked by fun, friendship and a sense of accomplishment. The spaghetti dinner was a highlight for Judith. Judith reflects, “there’s the whole togetherness of the church. We’re not a particularly large church, I guess. Everyone kind of knows each other and knows your name and like the senior choir and junior choir sometimes sing together and we have coffee afterwards and chat together and the older people know your name.”*

Like much of western society, Canada has changed a great deal since the end of World War II in an era of globalization. In this time religious groups have been profoundly impacted, including my own, the Anglican Church of Canada, which is smaller and older than it once was. Judith and her friends at church are a small segment of parish membership, and as will be presented in this chapter, a tiny

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Light, “Draw the Circle Wide,” © 1994 Common Cup Company, (No. 418) in *Common Praise, Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto, ON: Anglican Book Centre, 1998).

cohort among Canadian teens in that they go to and enjoy church. Yet, despite decline in numbers, resilience seems a mark of the church in a country that is becoming more and more polarized. In this chapter, casting a view through the modernity of Doehring's trifocal lens (see Chapter 2), I focus largely on the work of eminent Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby, though amplified by other scholars, and trace trends in religious participation within the Canadian population in general and among teens in particular. As well, I will discuss the influential role played by parents in religious formation and the passing on of faith. A final section returns to the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology with a brief reflective exercise in bracketing that seeks to bring the social science home.

### *Reginald Bibby and the Canadian Religious Landscape*

In the early days of my seminary formation I was introduced by a family member to the work of Reginald Bibby, a sociologist who had recently published a book entitled *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*.<sup>2</sup> In conversation I was informed that Bibby had plotted the decline and demise of mainline churches. In what I can only describe now as an act of willful avoidance coupled with a lack of any inclination toward viewing faith through the modernity angle of the trifocal lens or taking into consideration the empirical task of practical theology as informed by quantitative research, I placed Bibby's book on the shelf without cracking the cover. Once ordained and taking on the role of pastor and

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<sup>2</sup> Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Irwin Publishing, 1987).

congregational leader I began to collect first hand lived experience of the numbers Bibby reported. Though blessed to work in relatively vibrant parishes, it was clear that the church and the society in which I came of age was experiencing significant change and the church was struggling with issues of capacity, relevance, regular attendance, and membership. For example, in the early 1970s when my father was a Rector in a parish in the west end of Ottawa he oversaw a youth program that would have included at least 100 participants. In the early 1990s, I worked as an assistant curate and youth pastor in a parish in the west of Ottawa that included 50 participants. Today, at Christ Church Bells Corners, in the west end of Ottawa, I work with about 25 youth, numbers that have been constant since 2001. In time, I was compelled to take off the shelf a gift I once reluctantly received, either dismissing as irrelevant or simply sticking my head in the sand. As I read, I began to recognize the significance of Bibby's contribution as a Canadian scholar to the American dominated and burgeoning literature in the sociology of religion which features scholars such as Rodney Stark and Christian Smith, both to be referenced below.

Reginald Bibby's work represents an influential, extensive longitudinal study of religion in Canada tracked regularly beginning in 1975<sup>3</sup> and first reported extensively in 1987 with the publication of *Fragmented Gods*. Since then, Bibby has added to his data and analysis with a number of subsequent, iterative volumes.<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>3</sup> Reginald Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back: Religion's Demise and Rise and Why it Matters* (Lethbridge, AB: Project Canada Books, 2011), ix.

<sup>4</sup> Reginald Bibby, *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing, 1993); Reginald Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of*

the 1990s, Bibby painted a bleak picture by charting a marked statistical decline in religious participation. In 1993, Bibby wrote, “[by] the 1950s, the six in ten who claimed to be worshipping in the nation’s churches, synagogues, and temples had slipped to five in ten, by the 1970s, three in ten. It now stands [1990s] at just over two in ten. The attendance decline has been pervasive.”<sup>5</sup>

Bibby has also focused on membership as an important indicator; that is, what percentage of people who identify with a particular group (denomination) are actually on the membership role of a local congregation? Taking into account all faith groups, during a four-decade period (1950s to 1980s) there was a considerable reduction in this figure from 82% in, 1957, to 29% in 1990. Specifically, in this same time period, 24% of Anglicans attended services weekly, by 1990 that number had declined to 15%; in 1957, 74% of those who identified as Anglican were on a parish list, though by 1990 the figure dropped to 30%.<sup>6</sup>

As the 1990s unfolded, along with the marked decline in membership and attendance, Bibby and others, especially Neil Nevitte in Canada and Robert Putnam in the United States, tracked other social issues. For example, a decline in civic engagement, volunteerism, and over-all levels of trust was identified as well as a decreasing confidence in non-governmental hierarchical institutions, such as

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*Religion in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Stoddard Publishing, 2002); Bibby, *Beyond the Gods*, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 8.

churches and their leaders.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the even more stark reality for churches was that membership was aging and younger generations were less likely to become involved, in terms of both time and financial contribution.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Bibby projected a sustained and increasing decline for churches well into the twenty-first century.<sup>9</sup>

I graduated seminary and was ordained in 1992 and sensed I did so in a time of change and decline for the church. These were very discouraging times for we were experiencing the reality to which the numbers pointed. Gone or going were the days of a well resourced church with many members relative to the population, streaming with young people and families for whom the church played a central role. After actually taking the gift of Bibby's book off the shelf and then delving into his work, in 2001, I wrote a paper in which I included the following:

Ultimately, the data illustrates that Canadian churches are experiencing a marked decline in numbers and relevance. Fewer people go to church and fewer people are members of churches. The most active members are aging and younger Canadians are far less likely to be involved. Furthermore, Canadians have less confidence than they once did in the churches that dot their landscape. The evidence seems undeniable, Canadian churches are in crisis and at risk of imminent demise.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 76; Neil Nevitte, *The Decline in Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-national Perspective* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1997), 54-62; Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, NY: Simon and Shuster, 2000), 31-47, 116-147.

<sup>8</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 95-97; See also, Donald Posterski and Irwin Baker, *Where's a Good Church? Canadians Respond from the Pulpit, Podium, and Pew* (Winfield, BC: Woodlake Books, 1993), 106-111.

<sup>9</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 104-108.

<sup>10</sup> Peter John Hobbs, *What's a Neighbourhood Church to Do? Church Decline and the Nonprofit Sector*, A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Public Administration from Queens University, School of Policy Studies, Kingston Ontario to Professor Keith Banting for the course SPS 810: Challenges in Governance, April 2001, 4.



*Resilience, Rejuvenation, and the Power of Memory*

Not so fast, Reginald Bibby declares just one year later in the next publication of his ongoing research. In examining attendance and membership trends at the turn of the century, Bibby reported that the numerical freefall decline of the mainline churches halted in the 1990s and that though there “are fewer people in the Mainline population pool than in the past, ... those who are still there are showing signs of life. For the first time in three decades, the proportion of the “Mainline remnant” who are active ... remained fairly constant between 1990 and 2000.”<sup>11</sup> For Anglicans there was even a reversal of fortune reported in that in 1990 14% of members declared attending church weekly whereas in 2000 the number increased to 18%.<sup>12</sup> Further good news indicated that there was an increase in younger people in the life of the church: for example in 1990 only 8% of Anglicans between the ages of 18-25 attended services weekly, though by 2000 the number jumped to 13%.<sup>13</sup>

Over the years, Bibby has championed the statistically supported concept of religious memory<sup>14</sup> in which individuals who identify with a particular group – largely due to familial affiliation – are unlikely to switch to another group regardless

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<sup>11</sup> Bibby, *Restless God*, 75.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>14</sup> See especially, Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 152-168.

of their non-participation in the group with which they identify.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, though they may not be active they are open to further involvement and expect that in time they will turn to their own group for rites of passage.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for example, someone who thinks of herself as an Anglican, though not participating, is far more likely to become active in the Anglican church than any other, though a more likely, yet still remote, possibility would be to switch to another mainline denomination.<sup>17</sup>

Drawing on the insights of fellow sociologist Rodney Stark, Bibby developed a uniquely Canadian twist on Stark's notion of religious economies in which religious groups in the open and competitive religious markets of pluralistic societies see increased rates of participation.<sup>18</sup> In the Canadian context there exists a deep and abiding brand loyalty regardless of participation. Thus, despite the sentiment of the folk hymn "Draw the Circle Wide" quoted at the beginning of this chapter, religious groups seeking to increase participation would do well to focus on those in the citizenry who self-identify with their denomination rather than cast the statistically

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<sup>15</sup> Bibby, *Restless Gods*, 33-48. Bibby's concept of religious memory is aligned with more recent findings of Christian Smith in the United States who holds that American teens, when it comes to religion, are "quite content to follow in their parent's footsteps." Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenager* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 260.

<sup>16</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 167; See also Bibby, *Restless Gods*, 53.

<sup>17</sup> Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 167; See also Reginald Bibby, *A New Day: The Resilience and Restructuring of Religion in Canada* (Lethbridge, AB: Project Canada Books, 2012), 54.

<sup>18</sup> See Bibby, *Restless Gods*, 59-62. For a comprehensive explication of Stark's work see his collaboration with Roger Finke: Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

unlikely wide net of reaching out to the population as a whole. Bibby offers the following summary of religious memory and its import:

In adds up to a situation [i.e. the data of Canadian's religious participation] where beyond the 20% who attend services almost every week or more, there are another 60% plus who continue to identify with the country's dominant traditions. Most people in this latter category attend occasionally, believe and practice selectively, are not about to be recruited by alternatives, and are looking to their identification groups for rites of passage. They most definitely have not "dropped out."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, in 2002 Bibby suggested that the nation's historically dominant religious groups had ceased or reversed a three decade decline and - mindful of their resilience, the brand loyalty of their members, and dependent on their ability to respond within the competitive religious markets of a secularizing and increasingly pluralistic society - could well marshal a rejuvenation of religious participation in Canada. Yet, I hope not a membership scramble in a vain attempt for a romantic embrace of some past glory days of another epoch (see the next Chapter).

### *The Case for Polarization*

In 2011, however, Bibby's analysis would broaden as he struggled with the stability of Canada's religious groups versus the ever-increasing number of people over the years of his study that claimed to have no-religion (or religious "nones"). For example, on one hand, 7% of the Canadian population identified as Anglican in 2001 and in 2008 that number was slightly higher at 8%,<sup>20</sup> with attendance patterns

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<sup>19</sup> Bibby, *Restless Gods*, 48.

<sup>20</sup> Bibby, *Beyond the Gods*, 30, 47.

holding their own over the same period.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, in 1971 only 4% of Canadians identified themselves as having no religion whereas in 2008 that number had grown to 16% making it the fastest growing and second largest religious identification in the country after Roman Catholics<sup>22</sup> (a trend that is increasingly being mirrored in the United States<sup>23</sup>). In terms of attendance at religious services, 19% of Canadians attend weekly, 9% monthly, 30% yearly and 42% never do. Based on data such as these, Bibby now argues that neither a secularization leading to a reduction in religiosity nor one cultivating a religious revitalization marks the Canadian religious landscape. Rather he contends that Canada has become a country marked by religious polarization. As the number of those who identify as having no-religion grows (the “nones”), the historically dominant mainline traditions have been more or less stable over a generation. They are smaller than once before yet resilient and not likely to disappear, poised perhaps for growth if they can attract greater participation from the ambivalent middle comprised of those who identify with a religious group, participate little and yet remain open to increased involvement.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>23</sup> See for example: The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Nones” on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation,” A Project of the Pew Research Centre, <http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx> (accessed January 21, 2013).

While Bibby's polarization thesis has been criticized due to the size of the ambivalent middle,<sup>24</sup> it represents an explanation to the current situation and a trend worthy of tracking as well as holding up opportunities for marketing (using the parlance of religious economies) for established groups. In fact, the large ambivalent middle is currently a fluid entity in the Canadian Mosaic and as the extremes continue to polarize it may well be that in another ten years Bibby has discovered something very different. Perhaps, a shrinking middle and larger entrenched poles; or, perhaps, a steady flow to one of the extremes, the data suggesting it may well be flowing to the religious "nones." Thus, a call goes out to the mainline churches to take up the latent opportunity of religious memory to engage those in the middle that imagine in time they will turn to the church with which they identify and to which they expect someday to turn for services.

Despite Bibby's optimism regarding the resilience of mainline churches in Canada, there remains much for which to be concerned. Over time immigration patterns have changed<sup>25</sup> (seeing fewer Anglicans as new Canadians,<sup>26</sup> for example), family structure has evolved,<sup>27</sup> and the Canadian population has experienced lower

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<sup>24</sup> Joel Thiessen, "Review of *Beyond the Gods and Back: Religion's Demise and Rise and Why it Matters*, by Reginald Bibby, *Church and Faith Trends*," Volume 4, Issue 1 (July 2011), [http://files.efc-canada.net/min/rc/cft/V04I01/Beyond\\_The\\_Gods\\_and\\_Back\\_Review.pdf](http://files.efc-canada.net/min/rc/cft/V04I01/Beyond_The_Gods_and_Back_Review.pdf). (Accessed October 23, 1012).

<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada, *Canadian Demographics at a Glance*, Statistics, Canada Catalogue No. 91-003-X, Statistics Canada, Demographic Division, 2008, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-003-x/91-003-x2007001-eng.pdf> (accessed January 14, 2013), 5, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Bibby, *Beyond the Gods*, 30-31.

<sup>27</sup> Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of Population: Families, households, marital status,

birthrates and longer-life expectancy.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the Mainline pool of the general population has become older and smaller and so too has the actual size of the mainline churches. Again, for example, membership in the Anglican Church of Canada peaked at over 1.3 million in the 1960s and has declined steadily to approximately 500, 000 in 2010.<sup>29</sup> This in part is because of an aging membership that has not cultivated ongoing participation amongst the younger cohorts. In time, all things being equal, as the generations pass the mainline churches in general and the Anglican in particular will be an even smaller segment of the population in both relative and actual terms. Bibby himself clearly names the challenge facing the mainline churches as being urgent and critical, seemingly to suggest yet again that survival in the long-run is a question at hand. In fact, he claims that mainline denominations in Canada- including Anglicans - face a “mega-crisis ... with respect to their young people.”<sup>30</sup>

*Polarized Canadian Teens: Theist, Deist, and Atheist*

Along with his longitudinal research regarding religious participation, Bibby has also been tracking and analyzing social trends concerning teenagers. While this structural type of dwelling, collectives, The Daily, Wednesday, September, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/120919/dq120919a-eng.pdf> (accessed January 14, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Statistics Canada, *Demographics at a Glance*, 8-9, 13, 25-26, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Bibby, *A New Day*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Bibby, *Beyond the Gods*, 213.

work provides a comprehensive view of young people – their behavior, values, and beliefs – one element of focus in Bibby’s teen tracking, not surprisingly, is that of religion. His most recent work in this area, published in 2009,<sup>31</sup> sheds considerable light on the religiosity of Canadian teenagers. Along with all Christian groups, the number of teens who self identify as Anglicans has been in steady decline: in 1984 the number was 8%, in 2008 it was 2%, compared to 8% of Canadians in general who identified as Anglican. Projecting into the future, it is easy to conjecture that the Anglican Church in 40 or 50 years will be a tiny sliver of the Canadian population, its current teen cohort proving just such a sliver. Moreover, the number of teens in Canada now claiming to be avowed atheists is increasing exponentially and is a much larger group in terms of percentage when compared to the rest of the population. In 1985 6% of adults answered “No, I definitely do not believe in God,” compared with 7% in 2005. Teenagers, however, responding definitely no to belief in God were 6% , the same as the adult population, in 1984 and 16% in 2008.<sup>32</sup> On the other end of the belief spectrum, in 1985, 61% of adult Canadians responded definitely yes to belief in God compared to 55% in 2005. The teen trend was much more striking: falling from 54% in 1984 to 37% in 2008.<sup>33</sup> Bibby offers the following analysis:

... *the adult change* has not involved a movement to outright atheism so much as a movement from decisiveness about belief in God to tentative belief

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<sup>31</sup> Reginald Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials: How Canada’s Newest Generation is Responding to Change and Choice* (Lethbridge, AB: Project Canada Books, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

or increasing agnosticism. *With teens* we see what amounts to an ongoing intergenerational shift – from tentativeness to agnosticism, and from agnosticism to atheism.<sup>34</sup>

Attendance patterns have seen a similar shift. While the percentage of youth who attend weekly (21%) and monthly/plus (12%) has remained stable over the past two decades, more and more youth claim never to attend religious services, increasing to 47% in 2008 from 24% in 1992.<sup>35</sup> The polarization identified by Bibby in the study of the general population is more acute amongst teens.<sup>36</sup> On one hand, more and more Canadian teens claim to be atheists and never to attend religious services. On the other hand, as Bibby explains, although “the sizes of the affiliate pools of many groups - particularly protestants [including Anglicans] –have been decreasing, teens who do continue to identify are more inclined to participate than their earlier counterparts.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, those who do attend weekly or monthly/plus claim a high level of importance and enjoyment from their participation.<sup>38</sup>

This polarization identified in the teen population in Canada stands apart from teens “south of the border” in the United States. American sociologist Christian Smith conducted an extensive and highly regarded study of the religiosity and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 180.



spirituality of American teenagers.<sup>39</sup> Among his many conclusions, Smith posits a pan-spirituality amongst American teens that has inculcated all religious groups and he believes the population in general, a national phenomenon that he has coined Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD). Within this belief system, God exists and has created the universe, desires people to be nice and fair to one another and intervenes only when asked to resolve a problem. Further, life is about pursuing happiness and good feelings and people live with the assurance that those who are good will go to heaven.<sup>40</sup>

In his 2008 survey, Bibby tested the presence of MTD amongst Canadian teenagers and found little support for its widespread acceptance. Many of those teens that are active in their religious group do not “buy into the idea that God plays a passive role in their lives and that all religions are equally valid.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover those who never attend religious services question whether God plays any role in their life, are concerned about mutual care among people, and many question the notion that good people will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven. Bibby, notes that, although Smith’s sample was slightly younger and his survey conducted a few years

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<sup>39</sup> Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenager* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-163.

<sup>41</sup> Reginald Bibby, “Smith Details Referred to in *The Emerging Millennials*, 2009:183, God, Religion, Whatever,” [reginaldbibby.com](http://reginaldbibby.com), [http://reginaldbibby.com/images/Smith\\_Details,\\_Emerging\\_Millennials,\\_p.\\_183..pdf](http://reginaldbibby.com/images/Smith_Details,_Emerging_Millennials,_p._183..pdf) (accessed March 26, 2011).

earlier, 17% of Canadian teens are atheist compared to 3% in the United States.<sup>42</sup> Bibby claims that in Canada “teens who are involved in religious groups at most lean toward a kind of *Moral Therapeutic Theism*, those who are not toward a kind of *Moral Therapeutic Atheism*. Those most likely to be into “MT Deism”? Occasional attenders.”<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, Canadian teens reflect even more acutely the polarization and fragmentation of the general population. Specifically, those teens that are active in religious communities are distinct in many ways from other teens, both in belief, commitment, and involvement. They are, however, members of an increasingly smaller remnant within Canadian society relative to other teens and other members of their religious groups. Therefore, if you are an Anglican and a teenager that is active in your parish, like Judith whom I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the vast majority of your classmates at a public school are not. Furthermore, there are not very many active teens in your church, especially compared to all the older people, who nonetheless know your name.

### *Teens, Time, and Social Capital*

Bibby reports that the percentage of teens “who say they seldom or never ‘sit and think’ has doubled from 13% in 1984 to 26% today [2008].”<sup>44</sup> As a pastor I was

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Bibby, *Millennials*, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 173.

struck by this data and wondered about the place of spiritual practice in the lives of the teens entrusted to my care. I became motivated to find more ways to build in opportunities for children and youth to “sit and think” within the context of parish programs, of which *Lectio Divina* would be one example. Bibby suggests this decrease in sitting and thinking among teens may be the result of the frantic pace of life, hectic family schedules, and the exponential increase of gadgets and social media in the digital age.<sup>45</sup> My own observation and experience as a pastor as I interact with busy, connected people is that they often have, or claim to have, less time to devote to their interior lives – to sit and think - so I am inclined to agree with Bibby. Paradoxically, the same factors which lead to less time to ourselves may also be impacting our time to be together, exacerbating the decline of social capital, an observation described by American sociologist Robert Putnam in his seminal publication, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.<sup>46</sup> Social capital is the outcome of the activity of citizens who join community and neighborhood groups that have a wide array of goals and purposes, including religious groups, school associations, sporting programs, and service clubs. This diversity of associations creates a vast network of connectedness and participation that, empirical studies demonstrate, “make for better schools, lower crime, faster economic growth, longer lives, and more effective government.”<sup>47</sup> The factors

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, NY: Simon and Shuster, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone, Revisited,” *The Responsive Community: Rights and Responsibilities* 5:2 (Spring 1995): 20.

contributing to the decline of social capital are complex and varied, though are thought to include upward-mobility, two career households, suburban expansion, and the rise of television. Putnam's work culminated in the publication of *Bowling Alone* that tracked an observable decline in American social capital and posited the potentially widespread negative impact on society, from neighborhoods to the halls of power.

Religious groups feature prominently in Putnam's work, where he, like Bibby in Canada, also demonstrated a marked decline in participation.<sup>48</sup> In both the Canadian and American contexts,<sup>49</sup> religious groups (largely Christian) comprise a major share of the non-profit, charitable, volunteer sector and are significant generators of social capital and its societal benefits, including community cohesion, citizen development, and social service delivery.<sup>50</sup> So, in a sense, as the churches suffer so too does society – even in an increasingly pluralistic and polarized society since a decline in church involvement means there is a distinct possibility that there will follow a decline in the social capital at play in the wider community. Putnam in fact cites a study which ...

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<sup>48</sup> See for example: Ibid., 65-79.

<sup>49</sup> In the Canadian context see: Michael Hall and Keith Banting, "The Nonprofit Sector in Canada: An Introduction," in *The Nonprofit Sector in Canada: Roles and Relationships*, ed. Keith Banting, The Public Policy and the Third Sector Series (Montreal: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 2000), 11; For the United States see: Putnam, *Bowling Along: Collapse and Revival*, 66.

<sup>50</sup> See for example: Femida Handy and Ram A. Cnaan., "Religious Nonprofits: Social Service Provision by Congregations in Ontario," In *The Nonprofit Sector in Canada; Roles and Relationships*, ed. Keith Banting. The Public Policy and the Third Sector Series (Montreal: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 2000), 69-105. See also: Putnam, Ibid. 79; and Bibby, *Millenials*, 173.

... found that controlling for a relevant individual characteristics (such as race, gender, education, paternal education, family structure, religious involvement and so on) youths whose neighbors attend church are more likely to have a job, less likely to use drugs, and less likely to be involved in criminal activity. In other words, churchgoing (the most common form of civic engagement in America) has important externalities in the sense that it influences the behavior and life prospects of “bystanders,” whether or not they themselves are so engaged.<sup>51</sup>

Having an understanding of social capital and the role it plays in society and religious groups is, I believe, important for pastors.<sup>52</sup> For example, my own congregational study cited above, an exercise in formal attending, recommended that Christ Church Bells Corners seek ways to become more deeply involved in the community and to re-engage in social service outreach in a way that maximizes member participation. These recommendations were largely drawn from a series of interviews conducted during the study and viewed in light of my own reading and experience of the decline of social capital. As Bibby acknowledged at the turn of the century, the decline of social capital and participation in religious groups in Canada are interconnected if for no other reason than the pace of life and the scarcity of available time for participation in voluntary organizations.<sup>53</sup> Making use of the concept of social capital as a pastor can effect a great range of ministry initiatives. For this project thesis there are two dimensions of social capital that are, from my perspective, particularly relevant with regard to teens and their connectedness to their environments, in the church, their homes, and their communities.

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<sup>51</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone, Revisited*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Putnam particularly appeals to clergy to play a significant role in a revitalization of community, see: Robert Putnam, “Rebuilding Community: Let’s Meet,” Interview by David James Wood, *Christian Century* (February 10, 2004), 24-29.

<sup>53</sup> Bibby, *Beyond the Gods*, 27.

First, is the increasing fragmentation and busyness of people that appears to have visited contemporary society and is often equated with the decline in social capital. Whether it is the amount of time spent commuting, or the reality of two career households, or the ubiquitous connectivity of the digital age, it seems – and this is an observed informal attending – that time has become a rare commodity and less time is spent engaged in civic engagement, around the dining room table, or just sitting and thinking. While the data of social capital points to a societal problem of significant magnitude that churches can play a role in addressing, as a pastor I observe families and teens who live a frantic pace, taking little intentional time to be in community or alone with ones own thoughts.

Second is the challenge posed by generational succession, specifically the passing on of the faith and ministry of the church to an increasingly smaller generational cohort born of lower declining attendance and lower birthrates.<sup>54</sup> Both Bibby and Putnam<sup>55</sup> have demonstrated that decline in church attendance and withdrawal from civic engagement has increased with the generations following World War II so much so that, for example, only 2% of Canadian teens identify as Anglicans compared with 8% in the general population. At the same time as fewer and fewer teens are participating in religious groups and as fewer opportunities exist for gathering with people of all ages, Smith contends that the intergenerational nature of religious groups is for teens one of the complex social benefits that is garnered

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<sup>54</sup> See note 28 above.

<sup>55</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: Collapse and Revival*, 247-246. This has been a featured element throughout Bibby's work; see for example, Bibby, *Beyond the Gods*, 15-33.

through involvement in the same.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Eugene Roehlkepartain and Eboo Patel, exploring the question from the perspective of the spiritual development of young people, highlight the social capital benefits for youth who are actively involved in religious congregations.<sup>57</sup> Thus, on one hand, churches are a good place for teens to be; on the other hand, fewer of them are showing up.

Today's teen cohort will hopefully one day emerge as adult leaders in the church, charged with the stewardship of its ministry. From the current vantage point, one wonders given the trends of recent years whether the concept of Religious Memory championed by Bibby will hold the same sway for successive generations as it has in the past. At a time of dwindling resources often calling for such things as the restructuring of ministry delivery, fewer parishes, reformed governance, new sources of revenue, the issue of generational succession brought sharply into focus by the work of Bibby and Putnam should not be ignored. As a priest and pastor, the passing on of the faith, with its call to service and responsibility for ministry, from generation to generation is of crucial importance. A critical, if not the essential, role in this generational succession lies with parents.

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, 246.

<sup>57</sup> Eugene Roehlkepartain and Eboo Patel, "Congregation: Unexamined Crucible for Spiritual Development," in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. E. Roehlkepartain, P. Ebstyn King, L. Wagener, P. Benson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 324-336.

*Parents Making the Difference in the Midst of it All*

Whether to the most casual observer – an act of informal attending – or the most rigorous of scholars, there is near universal agreement that young people are influenced by, and develop within, their context, a complex system of ecologies.<sup>58</sup> Yet, as practical theologian Kenda Creasy Dean points out, research “is nearly unanimous on this point: parents matter most in shaping the religious lives of their children.”<sup>59</sup> Smith’s study affirms this contention and for his part challenges the “storm and stress” model of adolescence and by extension the sense felt by parents of having lost control or influence over their teenagers and argues such stereotypical notions of teenagers as aliens creates an unnecessary generational gap when in fact most teens enjoy their parents, embrace their values, and conform to the mainstream.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Smith emphatically claims “that the evidence clearly shows

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<sup>58</sup> For a near comprehensive exploration of the issues see: Marissa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, *Reasons of Living: Education and young people’s search for meaning, identity and spirituality - A Handbook* (Victoria, AUS: ACER Press, 2006). See also for example: Jeanne Ballantine and Keith Roberts, *Our Social World: Introduction to Sociology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2012); Peter Benson, “The Science of Child and Adolescent Spiritual Development: Definitional, Theoretical, and Field-Building Challenges,” in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. E. Roehlkepartain, P. Ebstyn King, L. Wagener, P. Benson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 484-497.

<sup>59</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, 264.



that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.”<sup>61</sup>

Bibby would agree and so too would Canadian teenagers, 92% of whom perceive that the way they have been brought up as influencing their lives a “great deal” or “quite a bit.” Additionally, mothers and fathers specifically were scored at 89% and 82% respectively, while personal will power and friends ranked 89% and 86% respectively. Thus, coupled with upbringing and parents specifically, Canadian teenagers perceive upbringing and parents to be a significant influence. As well, Canadian teens are most likely to turn to family when facing problems and needing support (35%) followed closely by friends (31%).<sup>62</sup> And when it comes to hanging out with their parents, contrary “to stereotypes, most teens say they actually find mom and dad enjoyable to have around.”<sup>63</sup>

It may seem a simple, though for some unexpected, truth that parents continue to be so influential in the lives of their teenagers. At the same time, it is equally the case that the kids are growing up, expanding their worldview, connecting with peers, and testing their own independence. As they experience and live through puberty, youth begin to engage in abstract thought and reasoning, as ethicist Andre Guidon puts it, aligning himself with early developmental theorists such as Jean

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 151.

Piaget and Erik Erickson, adolescents “think about thinking.”<sup>64</sup> Life for teenagers becomes a dynamic search for meaning and identity within a rich interpersonal engagement in which groups and loyalty are foundational.<sup>65</sup> I can recall as a seminarian, following a course with Guidon<sup>66</sup> in which he acknowledged that teenagers can belong to many groups, some positive and some negative, and passionately called for adults to provide healthy and stable crucibles of belonging for the adolescents entrusted to their care. Later he would write:

Despite the inevitable contradictions between the value systems and ideologies of the various communities to which they belong, adolescents need to establish and maintain some freely undertaken loyalties. Adolescents often cultivate a sharp sense of duty, truth, sincerity, authenticity and dedication in the select circles of family, school, peer group, sports team or church that define them. These are certainly integrative virtues, but practising them and maintaining the “happy medium” is a delicate matter.<sup>67</sup>

Sadly, Professor Guidon, would die shortly after the publication of these words, which were written before Putnam’s identification of the crisis in social capital and

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<sup>64</sup> Andre Guidon, *Moral Development: Ethics and Faith*, trans. Kenneth Russell, Novalis Teaching Series (Ottawa, ON: Novalis, Saint Paul University, 1992), 83.

<sup>65</sup> For a greater sense of the various developmental theories (psychological, cognitive, moral, spiritual, and faith, particularly for teenagers, see for example the following: Crawford and Graham, 410; Guidon, 81-94; James Fowler and Mary Lynn Dell, “Stages of Faith from Infancy through Adolescence: Reflections on Three Decades of Faith Development Theory,” in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. E. Roehlkepartain, P. Ebstyn King, L. Wagener, P. Benson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 34-35.

<sup>66</sup> Entitled Moral Existence, the course was foundational to the degree program (Bachelor of Theology). I cannot now determine the day of the particular lecture referenced, though I followed the course in the autumn of 1989 at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Ontario.

<sup>67</sup> Guidon, 87.

on the cusp of the digital revolution that would lead to the oft stereotypical, yet all too real, image of the contemporary teenager that is texting and browsing, connecting on *facebook* and *twitter*, gaming and messaging. Thus, the multiple groups and loyalties described by Guidon seem now exacerbated and increasingly fragmented; and, yet, despite the influence of friends, mentors, coaches, and congregations,<sup>68</sup> etc., as Smith, Bibby and others so emphatically hold – parents and upbringing continue to be central in the lives of teenagers.

Chris Boyatzis, David Dollahite, and Loren Marks also acknowledge the influential role of parents, family and upbringing in their survey of the family as a context for religious and spiritual development.<sup>69</sup> In addition, their work offers two particular insights into the relationship between parents and children that are of particular import to this thesis project. First is the offering of a transactional model of spiritual growth and development between parent and child in which both participants learn and grow from one another. This model stands in contrast to a transmission model that sees the passing on of competencies from parent to child, though not

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<sup>68</sup> Kelly Dean Swartz, William Bukowski, and Wayne Aoki, “Mentors, Friends, and Gurus: Peer and Nonparent Influences on Spiritual Development,” in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. E. Roehlkepartain, P. Ebstyn King, L. Wagener, P. Benson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 310-323; and Roehlkepartain and Patel, 324-336.

<sup>69</sup> Chris Boyatzis, David Dollahite, and Loren Marks, “The Family as a Context for Religious and Spiritual Development,” in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. E. Roehlkepartain, P. Ebstyn King, L. Wagener, P. Benson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 297-309.

reciprocated from child to parent.<sup>70</sup> Second is the notion of generative spirituality that is defined as

... a transcendent connection with the next generation that flows from and encourages conviction of abiding care for that generation. ... There are three aspects of generative spirituality for families: shared spiritual paradigm (common transcendent beliefs), shared spiritual practices (meaningful rituals and practices) and shared spiritual community (a congregation of care).<sup>71</sup>

Parents matter most in the lives of teenagers, yet the relationship is clearly dynamic and multifaceted. Parents learn and grow from their children at the same time as passing along, influencing, from generation to generation, the religiosity and spirituality of their children. As adolescents begin to look outward to form lasting bonds, discovering and exploring their own peer groups, thoughts, feelings and beliefs; parents, the data would support, can and do influence their teenagers in profound and lasting ways. Over the years as I have moved in and through community life, more often than not I have observed parents and teenagers in close and tender relationship in which the youth honour and acknowledge the loving, influential and supportive role of their parents. Recently at the dinner table, and mindful of this thesis and the literature reviewed above, I asked my 17 year old daughter, "So, who do you think is the greatest influence on your life?" In what can only be described as a bit of exacerbation in having to state the obvious, she replied, "Duh, of course, its you and mommy?"

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 299-301.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 304.

*Bringing the Social Science Home: An Exercise in Bracketing*

Richard Osmer claims that a pastor should consider empirical research because it helps in the interpretive process of a situation and in understanding the context of peoples' lives in which congregational ministry takes place.<sup>72</sup> Carrie Doehring echoes that sentiment in pointing to the modernity view of the trifocal lens that draws in the knowledge base gleaned through rational and scientific methods.<sup>73</sup> To my mind, the data, theories, and perspectives of Bibby and others as outlined in this chapter land within the lens of modernity in the context of empirical research. As well, they provide a remarkable breath of knowledge to understand the context in which I as a pastor engage in ministry. The work of Bibby and Putnam has especially influenced me over the years of my ministry as a pastor and congregational leader. Reginald Bibby has consistently demonstrated the rates of participation in Canadian religious groups and offered up-to-date data on what is taking place. In doing so, Bibby confirms for many pastors what they are experiencing in congregations; for example, aging membership, dwindling attendance, far fewer young people, and an emerging polarization within society in which historical religious groups, though smaller, prove resilient at least for now. Again Robert Putnam's identification of social capital, its decline and strategies for its revival, has shaped much of my thinking about, and experience of, community.

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<sup>72</sup> Osmer, 41.

<sup>73</sup> Doehring, 6.

Judith, who featured in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, and her friends at Christ Church Bells Corners are part of the 2% of Canadian teens that identify as Anglicans. What is more, she enjoys and is committed to her church, active within a cross-generational community, possibly receiving the benefits of the social capital it generates. An active, busy teenager, Judith's church is only one part of her life, one that has little to do with other elements, an all too common occurrence within the fragmentation of Canadian/North American society. The modern lens of empirical research may help to understand the context of Judith's life, yet she of course is one soul within the demographic numbers with her own views, aspirations, home, likes and dislikes, faith, questions, parish church and parents. Judith, like each of her friends at Christ Church Bells Corners who participated in *Lectio Divina* at home with parents, is a unique individual in a postmodern milieu within the intricate web of reality. I can certainly place her very much within the context revealed by the insights of Bibby, Putnam, Smith and others. Yet, within the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, the focus of my study is on the essence of the experience of those unique and specific youth who participated in the act of ministry at the centre of this thesis project.

As a pastor and priest serving as a congregational leader I am often concerned about the state of the church, the faithfulness, effectiveness, and sustainability of its ministry. Bibby and Putnam have helped frame and inform my concern. I experience and observe a church in crisis within a polarized society. I see a decline in social capital and long for integrated, robust communities. As a pastor working closely with young people, I hope and work for a church that will be vibrant in the

future, living with a certain dread that today's efforts are futile. Yet all this must be set aside, bracketed. This bracketing, within the intricate web of reality, cannot be such that even for a moment it does not abide in my consciousness as a pastor, priest, interpretive guide, or phenomenologist. My concerns have led me to this project. To bracket is to name what has shaped my consciousness and so naming to focus on the essence of the experience of Judith and her friends who participate in *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

## CHAPTER 4

### DANCING WITH GOD: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

*On any given Sunday, Michael can be found during fellowship after worship surrounded by young children, who are pulling at him, jumping on him, and wrestling him to the ground – the squeals and giggles echoing through the hall. Michael is in Grade 10 and serves in the church nursery and is one of the most popular babysitters in the parish. Michael says of church, “It’s fun, it’s nice to come and see everyone and just sort of have place to go. I like the feeling of community. That’s probably the best part of church for me.” Michael’s mom speaks tearfully and proudly about a time he stepped in and confronted a bully who was picking on a child with autism. Michael finds time to sit alone, at home or perhaps going off in the church when his mom is cleaning up, for moments of “calm, comfort and peace.” Michael and his mom engaged in Lectio Divina together, it was a peaceful time for both of them. They read the scripture and often grappled together with its meaning, at times giggled, though mostly took the time to be together quietly. They both enjoyed the moments, his mom cherished them; since Lent Michael comes home after school and often sits with his mom, “He didn’t do that before,” she says. After Michael described Lectio Divina as being peaceful, I asked, “Do you think that was an experience of God?” He replied, “I did experience peace, I don’t know if that’s experiencing God though.” We explored what it might mean to experience God, to have a spiritual experience. He wondered if he had ever experienced God and likened such an experience to making a difference. I wondered about this perspective and asked if all the time he spends with the children who love him so much was not “making a difference”? “I suppose that’s true,” he replied, “but that doesn’t feel like I’m really sacrificing much because I enjoy just playing with them. That’s something I enjoy doing. It’s not much of a sacrifice.” We sit quietly for a moment and I ask, “So you think that a deeper spiritual experience comes by way of sacrifice? Michael looks gently at me, lowers his head and quietly, assertively says, “Yes.”*

An essential role of a pastor is to engage in ongoing theological reflection. It is in large part a hermeneutic, interpretive exercise in which the immediacy and contexts of given circumstances, quantitative data and qualitative insights are considered in the deep and abiding frames of tradition, biblical narrative, spiritual practice, metaphor, meta-physics and qualities of the divine, of God. It is no simple task and like so much of the work of a pastor, priest, and teacher in a congregational setting can be diminished, even lost, in the throes of parish life – considered a luxury of the seminarian and scholar. With varying degrees of faithfulness and effectiveness, I



have striven to make theological reflection a central element of my ministry, most often embodied in the disciplines and practices of preaching, teaching, and continuing education.

For many reasons, ones that I hope will become clear in this chapter, theological reflection for me is likened to a dance, reflecting the creativity involved, the tradition (or craft) in which one must place such reflection, and the modesty with which it must be offered; yet most of all reflecting the very nature of God. In this chapter I engage a number of theologians who have impacted and informed my theological reflection as it relates to this thesis project. My initial reflection focuses on the very nature of God as revealed in the Christian tradition. I then explore issues of theology and ecclesiology and suggest that, in light of the demographic trends discussed in the previous chapter, the Canadian/North American church is now a remnant. Given that this thesis project places a spiritual practice (i.e. *Lectio Divina*) into the homes of parishioners, I then explore a theology of Christian households. Finally, I will consider the dynamic interplay between congregations and households, parents and children, identifying the need for the church to give increased attention and resources to faith formation in the home.

### *Theological Reflection and the Triune God*

Being a Doctor of Ministry student has afforded me the luxury of intentional time for theological reflection and has allowed me – somewhat serendipitously, or perhaps providentially – to affirm and accentuate the centrality of God revealed as Holy Trinity. I have had the opportunity to reflect on the Trinity in papers written

on a variety of topics and in a range of contexts.<sup>1</sup> That preparation equipped me to articulate a Trinitarian frame for the theological reflection that guides this chapter, and ultimately this thesis.

In the biblical narrative, God is revealed as Father, as Creator, who through an act of supreme self-giving provided a creation that is marked by abundance. Yet, our world seems often governed by economic frames of scarcity,<sup>2</sup> frequently leading to excessive consumption and hoarding. Biblical tradition, however, points to a God that first creates an abundance, then as illustrated in the provision of manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16), an assurance that there will always be enough, and in Jesus, as he feeds the multitude<sup>3</sup> in blessing and giving, the promise of there being more than enough – again an abundance. Commenting on the creation narrative of the first chapter of Genesis, Archbishop Desmond Tutu offers his own reflection:

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<sup>1</sup> Peter John Hobbs, *Vocation in the Future: A Personal Reflection*, A Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Virginia Theological Seminary to Professor Dan Heischman and Al Johnson for the Course SPL 931: Spirituality and Leadership; and Peter John Hobbs, *Theology of Leadership II*, A Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Virginia Theological Seminary, Spring 2010; and Peter John Hobbs, *A Theology of Friendship: A Suggested Way Forward for the Anglican Communion*, A Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Virginia Theological Seminary to Professor A. Katherine Grieb for the Course The Usefulness of the Apostle Paul for Churches in a Time of Conflict. Summer 2010.

<sup>2</sup> The microeconomics textbook on my shelves makes the following assertion, economics “is the study of how society manages its scarce resources.” N. Gregory Mankiw, Ronald D. Kneebone, Kenneth J. McKenzie and Nicholas Rowe, *Principles of Microeconomics*, First Canadian Edition (Toronto, ON: Harcourt, 1994), 4.

<sup>3</sup> It is of course an important story for the early church in that a rendering of the feeding of the multitude can be found in each of the four gospels, twice in both Matthew and Mark – Matthew 14:13-21, 15:32-39; Mark 6:30-44, 8:1-10; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14 - something that, apart from the passion narratives, cannot be said of any other gospel pericope.

Now isn't God's work of creation amazing? Now that is almost a trite observation. But just look at it. It just seems God went on a splurge: "There must be plants. Oh, no. That's not enough. There must be fish. Oh! Oh, no. That's not enough. There must be birds. Ah! Not yet enough. There must be animals. There must be stars and moons and suns." And then as if that were not enough, "There must be human beings." What an extraordinary kaleidoscope of variety - bewildering, glorious diversity. We might say that the first law of God's creation, the chief characteristic, must be abundance. God commanded all the creatures to be fruitful and multiply. And then next, after abundance, must surely rank this glorious diversity as the next law of creation. A diversity not leading to chaos but as the foundation of cosmos, of order. This diversity turns out to be the basis of why it is in fact a universe. It is the basis of interdependence of harmony.<sup>4</sup>

The Archbishop's description of the biblical revelation is playful and joyful, yet it also points to a creation that manifests a vast and rich diversity, an intricate web of complementarity, distinction, and interdependence. In my own theological reflection, such an abundant and diverse creation calls for awe, modesty, stewardship, and an openness to future possibilities.

God is revealed as Son, the incarnate Word. Jesus is the divine manifestation of self-emptying love, the *kenosis* of the Christological hymn of the second chapter of Philippians (verses 6-11) – humble and obedient unto death, so God exalted him. Within the Gospel narratives, Jesus is the embodiment of service, friendship, and radical hospitality, who responded with compassion to human suffering (e.g. Mark 1:41, Matthew 14:14); said the first will be last and the last will be first (e.g. Mark 10:23); called those who follow him to deny themselves (e.g. Luke 9:23); and bid us take the lesser seat at the banquet (Luke 14:7-11). Ultimately, Jesus would transform his relationship with his disciples when on the night of his betrayal he

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<sup>4</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Untitled" (Keynote Address, The Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference 2004: Leadership and Diversity, Winnipeg, MB, May 7, 2004).

called them no longer his servants, but his friends (John 15:12-15). Those who seek to follow Jesus are called to a life of self-giving, surrender, compassion, servant-hood, and hospitality.

God is revealed as Holy Spirit, moving in and around creation, giving, renewing and affirming life: the Spirit/Wind<sup>5</sup> of God moves over the water of creation (Genesis 1:2); gives life to dry bones in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1-10); conceives with Mary (Luke 1:35); descends like a dove upon Jesus at his baptism, drives him into the wilderness (Mark 1:10, 12), and comes upon the disciples as tongues of fire at Pentecost (Act 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit moves swiftly, at times mysteriously, in different ways for changing contexts and circumstances, challenging, transforming and affirming – active, present and moving. The Spirit calls for an openness to mystery, a commitment to context, adaptability and hopefulness.

The triune God as a doctrine is of course ancient, traditional, and normative for Christians, believing that the Holy Trinity offers humanity a means to live completely, with meaning and purpose within the scope of all that is.<sup>6</sup> Using a trifocals lens the doctrine of the Trinity falls well within the parameters of pre-modernity, and can seem stiff, static – far from a contextual, relational, incarnational deity, more a proposition to which one is invited to give intellectual assent. Yet, at its core, the Trinity is essentially about relationships – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit –

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<sup>5</sup> Mindful of course that in either Hebrew (*ruah*) or Greek (*pneuma*), spirit becomes interchangeable with wind or breath.

<sup>6</sup> For a helpful, contemporary survey of Trinitarian theology see, Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008).

each one distinct, yet each one holding within the fullness of the other. Many contemporary theologians have embraced the concept of *perichoresis* – to dance around – that was first explored in the patristic era and that in this postmodern age enables expression on the nature of the Trinity.<sup>7</sup> In an earlier paper, I wrote the following reflection:

Our Triune God is an intricate movement of relationships, dancing around expressing abundance and diversity, compassion and *kenosis*, mystery, stillness and swiftness – always present, never quite the same. If the notion of dance resonates, so too does the vision of friendship in which the friendship we hold as disciples of Jesus is because of our shared friendship with the triune God, whose deep abiding relationship is that of friends. A friendship that is more than the trite whims of association, but a deep abiding commitment to seek the benefit of others and to hold one another accountable and whole.<sup>8</sup>

Notions of dance and friendship as a means to explore the nature of God may not easily find a place in the lens of modernity with a penchant for the empirical, quantifiable. Yet, a place is most certainly found in pre-modernity and the ancient doctrinal teachings of the church.<sup>9</sup> As well, viewed through the lens of

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<sup>7</sup> For specific reference to the *perichoresis*, see Ibid, 213-14; Charles Fensham, *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead: The Future of the North American Church* (Ottawa: Novalis, Saint Paul University, 2008), 67; Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 83; and David Ford, *The Shape of Living: Spiritual Directions in Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 197.

<sup>8</sup> Hobbs, *Vocation*, 4. For a thorough discussion on the theology of friendship see: Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 205-235.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to Johnson cited above (n. 6), for a systematic discussion on the doctrine of the Trinity see, for example, John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 190-195. For a detailed and integrated historical perspective that includes emergence of Trinitarian theology in the early church and particularly in the patristic era see: W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984; See also, Henry

postmodernity, reflections on the Trinity inform a conception of the universal divine paradoxically at work in the particular contexts of time and place. God revealed as Creator, Incarnate Word and Holy Spirit inhabits specific circumstances in all of life and the Spirit moves in ways particular to each context. Thus, as the eternal Word of God was made flesh in the person of Jesus, so too in the smallest of things, of lived experience, the fullness, the essence of God may be found.

A teenager, then, at home with a parent engaging in *Lectio Divina* - an ancient spiritual practice of sacred text, silence, prayer and reflection - may experience something of the Holy Trinity and even give expression to the essence of the experience in a way that gives insight to the whole. The interpretation of such a lived experience within the complex, intricate nature of God's creation must be done with care, compassion and modesty - the very essence of hermeneutic phenomenology.

This section, in a few short paragraphs, is by no means a systematic treatise of the Trinity. It is rather a theological reflection rooted in tradition that presents my theo-logic concerning this thesis. On one hand, as indicated in the previous paragraph, this reflection on the triune God aligns with and informs my thinking on hermeneutic phenomenology. In the sections that follow the Trinitarian frame and its words and images will inform and frame theological reflection - implicitly or explicitly - concerning the church, household, and young people.

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Chadwick, *The Early Church: The Story of Emergent Christianity from the Apostolic Age to the foundation of the Church in Rome*, The Penguin History of the Church 1 (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1967), 125-151.

## *A Remnant Church and a Theology of the Cross*

In the previous chapter I drew on the work of Reginald Bibby and mapped out the decline of the mainline churches in Canada, particularly the denomination of which I am a member: the Anglican Church of Canada. Participation in religious congregations, their actual size, and their over-all share of the population has been shrinking over many decades, beginning in the early 1960s.<sup>10</sup> Even data that indicates a lasting resiliency seems contradicted by a tiny teenage cohort in the Anglican Church, and by a polarization marked by an increasing number of Canadians, and in particular teens, who call themselves atheist. This numerical decline coupled with less power and influence within society has spelled the end of the sociological and cultural epoch of Christendom, a time of some 1500 years during which the Christian Church was a dominant force in western society.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, during the period of European colonialism much of the Church's history was integrated with the established institutions of Euro-centric military, cultural, and economic expansionism and triumphalism.<sup>12</sup>

For some time I have thought of the Canadian church, especially my own denomination, as being a remnant community, now disestablished, a reduced

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<sup>10</sup> Bibby, *New Day*, 5; Bibby, *Unknown Gods*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Douglas John Hall, *Waiting for Gospel: an Appeal to the Dispirited Remnants of Protestant Establishment* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 55-58; Hall, *The Cross in Our Context*, 160-162; Also see, Ken Howard, "A New Middle Way? Surviving and Thriving in the Coming Religious Realignment," *The Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 104-107.

<sup>12</sup> Hall, *The Cross in our Context*, 188-199.

minority that is marginal in terms of power and influence. Such a remnant church may well be more aligned with the Hebrew people in exile or the church prior to the conversion of Constantine, generally considered the beginning of Christendom, than it is to the 1950s when being a citizen of Canada meant living in a culture deeply informed by church and Christianity. Yet the analogy to exile and the early church is imperfect. First of all, the Canadian church is not in exile, it continues to abide in the society in which it was once dominant. Nor is it a newly formed and fledgling religious group emerging from another religion within an empire that is potentially, and at times actually, hostile to both. Rather, it is a long-standing historical religious presence that, although reduced significantly, has demonstrated some long-term resiliency. The remnant church of today lives with the fresh memory of Christendom, the fumes of which are alluring. It is ever so tempting to seek to reinvent the so-called glory days of recent history at the expense of the call to respond to current realities and opportunities.

As a sociologist, Reginald Bibby provides data that measures religious participation and names numerical decline in the church and I for one am grateful for his contribution. The normative question, however, of the pastor and theologian, indeed of the disciple, is what ought our response to be?<sup>13</sup> On one hand, we may be driven to new forms of church growth, an eye always on numbers and demographics, a stance to which Charles Fensham of the Toronto School of Theology emphatically responds:

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<sup>13</sup> This is the third task of the framework of Practical Theology discussed in the Chapter 2 as presented by: Osmer, 4.



If churches are defined and understood first by means of demographic growth, or decline, there is something seriously wrong. Such logic makes the capitalist market model the arbiter for theological discourse. As a result of such a way of counting and measuring, churches have a sense of embarrassment at the loss of money, status, and traditional influence. Those within the churches develop new ways of hiding embarrassment, through strategies to regain power.<sup>14</sup>

Whether it is either realistic to think that the church will again return to its once dominate role in society or whether it will continue to be numerically small and marginal, an emphasis on expansion, numbers, and growth seems to represent an inability – according to Fensham – to embrace the opportunities of being a remnant community and the temptation to remain complicit with, though marginalized from, the establishment.

Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall captures the language of the current situation and the opportunity it provides the church when he writes, “Whatever else may be said about our de facto disestablishment, the good side of it is that the remnant of Christianity that remains is no longer obliged to mirror, in its doctrine, what is acceptable to the dominant culture and the policy making classes.”<sup>15</sup> Hall and Fensham represent a theological voice with which I am aligned that seeks to reflect deeply on the state of the church in order to be faithful, effective and authentically Christian in a new and challenging epoch. While the temptation to strive to return to the days of establishment, guided by the power of demographics and market growth, is very real and evident, Hall claims a normative urgency against such inclination when he writes, we “in the once powerful, now reduced

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<sup>14</sup> Fensham, *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Hall, *The Cross in Our Context*, 89.

churches of the West must work out our future in relation to our own peculiar past and present, from which there is no turning back to some earlier religious mentality to form of church and society.”<sup>16</sup>

For Hall freedom from the shackles of the establishment provides Christians with an opportunity to critically re-think the prevailing theology that served the triumphalism of Christendom.<sup>17</sup> Hall invites his readers to consider the *thin tradition* of the theology of the cross that, although largely elucidated by Martin Luther, has been alive in the tradition of the church since its inception, though relegated to the margins in the time of Christendom.<sup>18</sup> A theology of the cross acknowledges the complexity and intricate nature of creation, beckoning the church to move into the specific contexts of the world<sup>19</sup> with a modest posture<sup>20</sup> that within this complexity follows the example of Jesus, indeed the movement of the Risen One,<sup>21</sup> in seeking out the suffering of the world in order to bring something of God’s compassion to bear.<sup>22</sup> Hall offers this summative reflection on the theology of the cross:

The most succinct and portable way I have found to characterize the theology of the cross is to recall the three so-called theological virtues named

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>17</sup>For example, see: Ibid., 112, 169.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 22-24.

by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13: faith, hope, and love. But, remembering the importance of the *via negativa* for both Paul and Luther, the three positive virtues should be stated together with what they negate: faith (not sight), hope (not consummation), love (not power). Without the three negations, the three positives too easily devolve into platitudes. It is necessary always, when speaking of this tradition, to keep before one that which is ruled out – the *theologia gloriae*. The theology of glory, in whatever guise it assumes, is invariably tempted to be a theology of sight, not faith; finality, not hope; and power, not love.<sup>23</sup>

Fensham acknowledges the import of Hall's theological inquiry in the North American context,<sup>24</sup> aligning himself with a theology of the cross at the same time as offering his own insight. While Hall seemingly considers disestablishment as complete, the church having reached the point of no return, Fensham is suspicious of the continuing draw of the dominant culture in undermining a re-thinking of theology. Along with the concern for the predominance of church growth evangelism rooted in the expansionism of imperialism and the market ideology,<sup>25</sup> Fensham is critical of a digital age that privileges management, mastery, measurement, technique, and marketing.<sup>26</sup> Fensham's metaphor of a dark age ahead for the church, drawing on the work of Jane Jacobs,<sup>27</sup> presents a chilling perspective for the church:

... the Dark Age refers fundamentally to the loss of memory, wisdom, meaning and moral ethic related to the reign of God and the vision of the restoration of God's creation. The Dark Age Ahead is a dark age for the Church, North American as well as global. The darkness is not lodged in the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>24</sup> See for example: Fensham, *Emerging*, 7, 142, 168.

<sup>25</sup> See for example: Ibid., 63, 149.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 77-101.

<sup>27</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead* (Toronto, ON: Random House Canada, 2004).

loss of prosperity and the stimulation of infotainment, but rather in the loss of more basic things that make us human, allow us to relate meaningfully and organize our relationships for the common good.<sup>28</sup>

Fensham, by contrast with the dominant theological rhetoric of our time, envisions a North American church that readies itself for a dark age with a renewed commitment to a critical theology that emphasizes God's work in creation and particularly as incarnate in the poor, vulnerable and marginalized, drawing on the biblical motif of the crowds of the gospel of Mark which are likened to the latent church as opposed to the intentional church.<sup>29</sup> Fensham calls for a Eucharistic, doxological church committed to hospitality, a new-monasticism, stewardship, and pilgrimage with a specific orientation toward the stranger.<sup>30</sup> Like the church that Hall envisions, it is a Christian movement toward the world. The following provides some concrete application of his thoughts for a church such as the one in which I serve:

To be doxological in our intentional Christian communities would mean never to lose sight of our call to solidarity and resistance with the latent church, and to heed such examples from other parts of the world. For a suburban church this suggests more than sending money; it means linking with communities, and bringing presence and praise through active solidarity. The latent church is both outside and inside intentional Christian communities. Understanding the church this way will both challenge our culture's mastery, management, and demand for efficiency, and it will engage it by responding to the voices of despair that are drowned out by facile optimism and demands for performance and efficiency. If our doxology is practiced like this, we will be a glimmer of the reign of God, or perhaps a light no longer under the bushel.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Fensham. *Emerging*, 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 165-166.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 168-173.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167.

Hall and Fensham offer a prophetic vision for a remnant church within the Canadian context, grounded in the thin tradition of the theology of the cross, and both offer a thorough critique of church and culture. The triune-*perichoretic* God moves in and through creation and can be discerned and sought within and without the institution of the Church, whose authenticity is manifest when Christian people move toward and into the world focused on bringing something of God's compassion to bear upon suffering. A remnant church in a pluralistic, multi-faith milieu moves about the complexity of it all, mindful that the dance of the Trinity goes on around and about, and seeks through a modest quest of faith (not sight), hope (not fulfillment), and love (not power) to be one with the creator – very often on the margins - in a *kenosis*, a life of self-emptying. It is a church that is mostly light, and salt, and yeast, and seed.

My own inclination and reflection lies clearly with this vision and hope for the remnant church in the context in which I serve. I am however mindful due to the pragmatic and practical nature of congregational leadership that Christian parishes and the good folk who call them their spiritual homes are not always so inclined, the lingering wafts of establishment and Christendom continue to have hold. Many contemporary Christians experience the decline and seek to address it through the lens of modernity, especially the rubrics of management, mastery, and technique. An emphasis on financial and congregational development, restructuring governance and consolidating resources, and an ongoing parade of new ideas, techniques, programs often reveals a church complicit to the dominant culture and scrambling to keep-up, however hopeless and unfaithful such a quest may in fact be.

And yet, to claim the reality of being a remnant community and to trust in the presence of God to guide the church to a place on the margins remains a passion for me as a pastor and priest. The process of growing into the reality to which the church is now called will be challenging and at times painful, such is the essence of a theology of the cross. Realistically, reduction and decline may continue apace, followed whether strategically or chaotically, perhaps *perichorectically*, with significant institutional change. I remain hopeful that in time, and likely long after I have passed into a heavenly realm, a Christian movement will continue to abide in the Canadian context expressing something of the essence of the church Hall and Fensham envision, and in which I will have spent my life.

In the meantime, church leaders will continue to respond to the challenges of post-Christendom, theologians will continue to call us to re-think how we are to be church, and congregations will ebb and flow, and at times disappear. While I spend much of my time with church leadership in the strategic response to the context, I resonate mostly with theologians such as Hall and Fensham who envision a church that seeks with the crucified and risen One to move into the world. And yet, despite my resonance with their vision and theology, I perceive a gap. The church does indeed need to look beyond itself and move into the world, to the marginal, the stranger, and the places of suffering – the latent church. At the same time, a remnant church must also take a place in that which is near, though which it has for too long ignored: the homes of those who continue to abide in the church, the Christian remnant. It is there, often manifest in the relationships of parent and child, though not exclusively for households and families take many forms, that the

faith formation of a remnant church, which paradoxically is called to move beyond itself, must be fortified for the long and hopeful pilgrimage into the Dark Age.

### *Thinking Theologically about Households*

At the heart of my thesis is the belief that the home, the household, is a place that is essential to the faith formation of children. In an increasingly pluralistic, secularized society the household along with the congregation are two loci, and often only, places in which to nurture faith. And, as pointed out in the previous chapter, parents matter most. The temptation may be, and often is the case in congregational ministry, to identify a problem and rush in with activities and programs. Or, as Fensham might say, people are seduced by mastery and technique. The discipline of theological reflection, however, begs that consideration be given to first principles; to ask the question, “How do we think theologically about our homes and in a way that is consistent with how we think about the church and world?” Fortunately for the pastor, the church is blessed with contemporary theologians who invite our reflection. Thomas Breidenthal is one such theologian who has written extensively on Christian households.<sup>32</sup>

Breidenthal envisions a church that is oriented toward the world and takes as his point of departure the biblical commandment to love your neighbour (e.g. Leviticus 19:18 and Mark 12:31) as a call to embrace the nearness of the other, friend or

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas Breidenthal, *Christian Households: The Sanctification of Nearness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997).

stranger. For Breidenthal, nearness is an existential reality that is inescapable within the realm of human interaction, he writes:

Nearness simply befalls us, and it does so whenever we encounter another person who awakens our desire for communion or (which is more the case), arouses in us an (unwanted) sense of duty. We are born connected because we are made by God to be part of a community united in God's praise.<sup>33</sup>

A tension exists however between the obvious layers of human relations, friends, family, and strangers. While the experience of nearness finds a place in all such relations, though each marked by its own dynamic, there are those few with whom we are actually familiar, living out the day to day routines, rituals, intimacies and ebbs and flow of life. Households are marked by the familiar and in doing so symbolize a quality of connection that is central to the reign of God. And yet, it is impossible this side of the fulfillment of God's reign for all to be equally familiar, and in our attempts as church to enact such exhaustive familiarity we paradoxically become exclusive. Breidenthal cites Paul's explication of the Lord's Supper in Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:20-30) and interprets it as being in part an injunction that the Eucharist is not to have the markings of a household meal, but rather should be

... celebrated as a formal, public rite. Paul implies that the Church is not essentially a household marked by familiar ties, but rather a mystery of vast proportions in which strangers and family members share equally and in which there are no outsiders – and thus no insiders.<sup>34</sup>

Such a notion resonates with anyone who has encountered a congregation that holds itself up as being open and welcoming and then stands on the sidelines and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 11.



watches the depth of the fellowship among members who fail to extend a friendly gesture, presenting instead a form of intrusive nearness. The Christian household is the place for the familiar whereas “in the name of connection the Church must always be looking outward”<sup>35</sup> Here Breidenthal very much echoes Hall and Fensham.

Without question, Breidenthal is inclusive of the many forms of Christian households, including monastic houses, seminaries, same-sex unions, marriage with or without children, single parent households, and singles who form familiar ties as if being under one roof, <sup>36</sup> yet together they share a common vocation with the larger Christian enterprise. What follows is an excellent summary of Breidenthal’s theology of the household:

The Christian approach to householding ... involves a triple movement. We must begin by rejecting the household’s claim to be an end-in-itself. This is the claim which Jesus rejects when he subordinates “family values” to the summons of the cross. The first movement is immediately followed by the second: the ecstatic vision of the heavenly wedding banquet to which all are invited and where familiarity with everyone is achieved. The third movement is the step back into householding as a way of life in which we can learn and practice Christlike familiarity with a few people, in preparation for the boundless familiarity that awaits us at the end of time.<sup>37</sup>

The Christian household shares life together at levels of familiarity and intimacy that cannot be found elsewhere, a daily exposure of weakness, gracefulness, tenderness, companionship and “common dependence on God.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, it must find

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 35.

its place in the larger context of the gathered community to which it is accountable. This accountability to the church is one of nine disciplines of the Christian household, the others being bodily fellowship, exclusivity, permanence, equality, nonviolence, generosity, hospitality, and nurture.<sup>39</sup>

In households that include children a unique embrace of nearness emerges as the child – the daughter or son -

... becomes the very paradigm for the stranger who draws near. ... [Children] are a sign to adults of our mortality and our lack of self-sufficiency. We take care of them for a while, but then succumb to their care in our old age, and, after we die, we are remembered by them for good or ill. Women may experience them as invaders of their bodies, and even the most loving [spouses] must resign themselves to the fact that their daughters and sons come between them and erase their privacy. There is no more obvious occasion for the embrace of nearness than the birth of a child, and no more concrete instance of our availability to one another than the ongoing interchange between one generation and the next.<sup>40</sup>

As a father of three daughters, all now teenagers, it seems almost odd, even disloyal, to contemplate them as strangers that gave pause to an embrace of nearness, the embrace seemingly so easy, so human, so divine. Yet, Breidenthal's analysis at the same time rings true. The child brought into the midst of a household changes things radically, an unknown stranger whose personality is an unraveling mystery, a nearness with which parents, indeed all householders, must grapple. While this may be true of all human households, coming to terms with the child stranger in their midst, the Christian vocation finds its place both in the embrace of such nearness and in its witness to the world. Breidenthal explains:

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

If we leave out all the cultural and sociological reasons why a given couple might value parenting, we come down to this: When Christian couples (and the church as a whole) define parenting as a form of love of neighbor, they provide us with proof that by love of neighbor Christians mean the acceptance and affirmation of our radical availability to one another. In endorsing parenthood as a vocation, therefore, the church demonstrates its conviction that *all* Christian living should not only tolerate nearness, but seek it out.<sup>41</sup>

Breidenthal offers a frame in which to theologically consider the Christian household, one that fits well with the ecclesiology that emerges from the critical reflection of Hall and Fensham. The Christian household in all its many forms is a place of familiarity in which nearness – the love of neighbor - can be embraced. From the household a place is be taken in the intentional Christian assembly, a community comprised of intimates, friends and strangers always oriented toward the world. From the diversity of the assembly and the familiarity of the household, the Church is prepared to move into the world for moments of unexpected nearness, moments of welcome, of service, of encountering something of human suffering in which the compassion of God can be brought to bear. Within this dynamic are Christian households that engage parenting, the paradoxical experience of nearness in which the stranger from within shapes and bears witness to the nearness of the reign of God from generation to generation, as a witness to the church and the world of God's call to love your neighbor.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

## *Youth, Parents, Home, and Congregations*

As the church has grappled with the realities of post-Christendom and de-facto disestablishment, congregational development has for a long time been an area of practical theology that has received a great deal of attention. As I indicated in Chapter 2, my own library is well populated with books in this field. Considerable and creative thought and practice has been given to the place of youth within congregations. Increasingly, at least theoretically, it is understood that youth are beneficial and benefited when they are integrated into the fullness of congregational life.

Writers such as David White and Kenda Creasy Dean have particularly demonstrated the theological importance and practical possibilities of this view. Along with her colleague Ron Foster, Creasy Dean contributed to a re-thinking of youth ministry from a focus on program and numbers, to a focus on the incarnation.<sup>42</sup> Using the *theotokos* nomenclature of the Virgin Mary in Orthodox theology, Foster and Creasy Dean present Godbearing as not only a model for youth ministry, but also as a ways and means of discipleship for congregations.<sup>43</sup> Youth ministry ought not to be segmented from congregational life and carried out by a

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<sup>42</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, *The God Bearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-54.

few,<sup>44</sup> rather at its very centre a congregation commits to the Godbearing ministry of soul tending youth, providing the same for the entire community.<sup>45</sup>

As a practical theologian, David White argues that as the theoretical study of adolescence emerged in the twentieth century, so too did the segmentation of youth away from an integrated life with community and family into a distinct cohort set aside to train for economic performance and targeted for consumption.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, Christian congregations abdicated youth ministry, often marginalizing youth within parish life,<sup>47</sup> leaving its theory and practice to the extra-parochial entities whose insights seldom translate in a local context.<sup>48</sup> White provides this sharp social and ecclesiastical critique all the while offering an alternative that invites youth and congregations into an integrated and ongoing method of discernment that seeks to capture the needs and struggles, *charisms* and wisdom, of a local context.<sup>49</sup> He appeals for an embracing of “a range of practices integral to Christian faith and life: for example, prayer, worship, reading, and interpreting scripture, hospitality to strangers, seeking justice, creativity, care for the earth,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 31-33.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 73-75.

<sup>46</sup> David F. White, *Practicing Discernment with Youth: A Transformative Youth Ministry Approach*, Youth Ministry Alternatives (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2005), 13-34.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 63-85.

Sabbath keeping, feasting and more.”<sup>50</sup> Rooted in a *perichoretic* trinitarianism and drawing on many elements of tradition while engaging the tension between the pre-modern and post-modern,<sup>51</sup> White offers a framework that identifies four practices (Listening, Understanding, Remembering/Dreaming, and Acting) and outlines many practical suggestions for youth ministry in a congregational context.

White and Creasy Dean intentionally and rigorously locate youth ministry within a context of theological reflection that gives rise to pragmatic responses that seek to integrate youth fully into the community with a view to fostering Christian formation for all ages. Creasy Dean most certainly gives heed to the importance of family for young people,<sup>52</sup> yet along with White the emphasis is primarily, overwhelmingly, on congregational life. The attention given to congregations is without questions important as we enter into the reality of being apost-Christendom, remnant Church. Nevertheless, a clearer understanding of the importance of parents in the lives of teenagers, a compelling theology of households, and interest and attention to the Christian formation of children in those households seems an urgent call. David Anderson; in fact, names the lack of attention given to the home as being the Great Omission of the church in a play on words in juxtaposition to the Great Commission of Matthew’s gospel (Matthew 28:16-20).

... the church’s ongoing reformation and renewal cannot be effective as long as the church pursues the Great Commission while at the same time committing the Great Omission, the neglect of the home in making disciples.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 80-84.

<sup>52</sup> Creasy Dean and Foster, *Godbearing*, 79-82.

The omission of the home as a vital partner with the public congregational life has hampered attempts to revive the outreach focus of the church in recent decades. Factoring in the role of the home is not the only important ingredient to congregational renewal; it is simply the one consistently overlooked by teachers, authors, and practitioners of congregational proposals. The examples are numerous in the current literature. Many wonderful efforts in the diverse circles have fostered congregational renewal. But this one glaring omission remains. Without rejecting these other efforts, we must lift up what often is missing in the attempt to renew our congregations and to pass on the Christian faith to a variety of generations and communities: the role of the home.<sup>53</sup>

This omission in Anderson's view came into sharp focus as the generation born between 1925 and 1944, the most churched in American history, would parent the post-World War II baby boom generation which would become the least churched.<sup>54</sup> This time frame follows the timeline of Bibby's marked decline, the growing impact of the institutionalization of adolescence identified by White, the decline of social capital championed by Putnam, and the emerging de facto disestablishment of the church moving into post Christendom discussed by Hall. Anderson adds another layer when he discusses an expert-driven culture in which institutions replace families in key areas of the training, education, and formation of children and youth.<sup>55</sup> Illustrative of this is the penchant for parents to be reduced to chaperones, chauffeurs, and personal assistants as they schedule, feed, and transport their

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<sup>53</sup> David Anderson, *From the Great Omission to Vibrant Faith: the Role of the Home in Renewing the Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Vibrant Faith Publishing, by The Youth and Family Institute., 2009), 17.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 18. See also: David W. Anderson, "The Great Omission: The Role of the Home in the Church's Life, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," [http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Lutheran-Partners/Complete-Issue/090304/090304\\_04.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Lutheran-Partners/Complete-Issue/090304/090304_04.aspx) (accessed May 12, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, *The Great Omission*, 56-57.

children to sporting programs, music lessons, dance classes and any number of other extracurricular activities, though high school itself represents a major factor in this expert driven institutionalization of adolescence.<sup>56</sup> For Anderson the church has been complicit in this process and together with parents has abdicated the household as a place for Christian formation (and I would add, life formation) as clergy and youth pastors have implicitly or explicitly told parents “send us your kids, drop them off, and we will make them into Christians for you,” just as a coach might do the same for curling or hockey.<sup>57</sup>

Anderson points to the biblical antecedent of parental role in religious formation of their children, citing Deuteronomy 6:6-7,<sup>58</sup> “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.” The Pauline writer offers tender words to Timothy, recognizing the role his parents played in his own formation, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you” (2 Timothy 1:5). Describing the historical and normative role that parents played in the faith formation of their children within the context of a household in pre-industrial societies, Anderson points to the Small Catechism of Martin Luther that was intended for household use, though more recently has been

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<sup>56</sup> White, 38.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, “The Great Omission and the Lutheran Church.”

<sup>58</sup> Anderson, *The Great Omission*, 27.



primarily used in a congregational context.<sup>59</sup> Anderson presents a framework to move, as the title of his book suggests, from the great omission to a vibrant faith, that includes a strong partnership between congregation and household, clearly emphasizing the role of parents and other mentoring adults in a cross-generational process of faith formation. Within this frame Anderson identifies four research-based keys for practicing faith within households: caring conversations, devotions, service, ritual and traditions. As the church has faced the intricate and complex crisis of our day, there are many doing good work to address a comprehensive renewal of the church, to re-imagine theology for a new epoch, and to recalibrate youth ministry. Anderson stands out as a rare voice in his insistence on reclaiming the household as a critical place for the faith formation of children and youth.

*Bring the Theology Home: An Exercise in Bracketing*

At times it can become very dispiriting to serve as a priest and pastor in the church. The reduction in demographics and finances are discouraging in a society that values growth, skill, technique, and mastery. Theological reflection as a matter of discipline invites the church – and the particular priest and pastor – into a place of wonder, in both senses of that word, curiosity and awe. It permits an exploration of first principles that consider the current circumstances and presenting challenges in the broader context of tradition. This thesis project – as I have repeatedly claimed – is one pastor’s focus on the essence of the lived experience of teenagers

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 73.

doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. Yet, however focused the question may be it needs at least in part to be considered in broader contexts such as the church in the world, the household, and the relationship between children and parents. The church stands in the early years of a new epoch of post-Christendom and de facto disestablishment. For good or for ill, gone are the days of dominance, cultural integration, and numerical grandness and stability. Theologians, such as Hall and Fensham, invite the church to re-think our theology and mission in these early days, reclaiming an ancient theology that calls us into the world, into the future – engaging the stranger, bringing compassion to bear upon suffering; a church on the margins for the margins. Breidenthal thinks deeply about the Christian household in this context and points to its unique vocation for all who live in households and for those who do so as parents. As the church strives for renewal within congregations and judicatories, Anderson prophetically calls for particular attention to be given to the ministry of the home as an essential place of faith formation.

My young friend Michael, and I am sure of this, spends very little time thinking deeply about the church or a theology of the household or whether more attention should be given to the ministry of his home. He does though wonder about God, he does express his enjoyment of church, he does serve and he does stand up for those on the margins, he does find moments of peace and familiarity, and he gives voice to his questions. And in his wondering about the experience, his naming of the centrality of sacrifice, he has somehow touched on a very essence of the divine – *kenosis*, the self-giving, emptying of one for the other. As he plays with the children,

he finds enjoyment, delight, maybe even abundance. As he sits with his mother, he experiences, peace and calm, maybe even the gentle brooding of the spirit. And yet he wonders whether there is more, more expected of him, even to the point of suffering, a sacrifice. Maybe in that wondering he will discover, indeed experience, something more fully of God.

At times it can become very dispiriting to serve as a priest and pastor in the church, the challenges and context of being a remnant are so very real. Yet, in abundance and diversity; in presence and movement, gentleness and mystery; in service and sacrifice, compassion and hospitality; in self-giving and surrender, our triune God is at work, dancing around this creation. And so at times I need to set all the concerns aside, bracket them even though they call me to faithfulness, and I must dance. Conversations with Michael and his friends, exploring with them the essence of the experience of doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents is just such a dance – one in which God takes the lead.

## CHAPTER 5

### DESIGNING THE PROJECT AND LISTENING TO PARENTS

*Harmony lives a full and active life. She plays in the Church band and takes lessons for fiddle and piano. The church music director, a hard assessor of young talent, often comments on the excellence of her musicality. Harmony plays sports at school and in the community. She attends youth activities in the parish and sometimes goes to another youth group with a friend, occasionally needing to process her own Anglican identity relative to the more conservative evangelical church of her friend. She prays and reads her bible with some frequency, always in solitude. Harmony is a busy teen and hard to pin down, she has many competing interests. And yet, her mother claims it is Harmony who insists that they get to church most every Sunday. When Harmony is not in the band she is serving at the altar or helping in the nursery. Reflecting on other activities, especially school, Harmony says "Church is more of a choice that I make and I'm proud that I go to church and that I have faith, I want that. It only happens once a week and Church is a special time and I find Church is different than school. You can talk to anybody at church, everybody is considered family and it makes a bigger impact in my life." Harmony and her mom struggled to find time to do Lectio Divina, so they did it mostly in the car on the way to appointments and activities. There was more discussion than silence. Her mom enjoyed the experience because "it was nice to be communicating with Harmony. Often when we're driving she's texting so she had to put down her phone." Harmony said of Lectio Divina, "it was an opportunity to feel closer to God in a time that I wouldn't be usually. In the car you don't always feel close to God ... I think I feel closer to God with [my mom] now." Reflecting upon Jesus in the temple over turning the tables of the money-changers (John 2:13-22), a passage read during Lectio Divina, Harmony would later write, "I felt I was being called to remember that God is above all other things in my life, and that I have to remember not to let other things take the place of God." Harmony and her mother didn't think they could continue Lectio Divina except perhaps at different times during the year.*

This is a transitional chapter in which attention turns to the specifics of the research project of this thesis; namely, the essence of the experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. The initial section offers a description of the research design and the steps taken in its implementation up to, though not including, the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis (see the next chapter). Throughout this chapter, and specifically in the second section, I outline the modifications made to the research design in the context of the characteristic of

emergent design introduced in Chapter 2 and outlined more fully here. The third section provides information taken from interviews and a survey completed by parents whose households participated in the *Lectio Divina* project. Information gleaned from the parents is set in the context of semiformal attending within the continuum of attending developed by Richard Osmer and discussed in Chapter 2. A final section, in the tradition of bracketing, sets the context for the next chapter that focuses specifically on the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

#### *Project Timelines, Procedures, and Participation*

*Preliminary Steps and Readiness:* At the summer 2011 residency of the Doctor of Ministry program at Virginia Theological Seminary I presented my thesis project proposal to peers and faculty and received approval from the faculty to proceed with the project. Initially, the project was to be carried out during Advent 2011. The decision was made in October to delay the *Lectio Divina* Project until Lent 2012. From November 2011 until the end of January 2012 I developed the resources and research instruments that would be used during the project, outlined below in detail and available in the appendices. It was during this period that I was on a diligent search for a method (see Chapter 2) of inquiry and analysis that ultimately led to a determination of the usefulness, and thus selection, of hermeneutic phenomenology.

During the fall of 2011, I informally communicated with some parish teenagers and their parents the nature of my project thesis and that I would be inviting them to participate. Many of the youth had participated in *Lectio Divina* during

Confirmation class and at parish youth gatherings. Some parents had participated in *Lectio Divina* when it was offered as a weeknight spiritual practice at the church facility over the course of a number of years, most recently during Advent and Lent in 2009, 2010, and 2011.

*Formal Invitation to Participate in Thesis Project:* On January 31, 2012 I sent a letter<sup>1</sup> attached to an email<sup>2</sup> to parents of thirteen households in the parish. To the best of my abilities and knowledge this included all the households of the parish with teenagers in high school. In all 18 teenagers were invited to participate. One of the households included was my own. The letter outlines in general terms the nature of the project, including the completing of online surveys by all participants and a series of interviews from a smaller group of participants. The letter further emphasized the voluntary nature of the project and that comments would be reported anonymously. The letter indicated I would be following up with a phone call within a few days to inquire about willingness to participate and, if so, to set up initial interviews.

*Follow up Phone Calls and Early Modification to the Design:* In the days following the sending of the initial email I contacted by telephone a parent in each of the households, in some cases leaving a message with reference to the letter sent and inquiring about participation. Of the 13 households invited to participate, 7 agreed which included 2 households with 2 high school students for a total of 10 teenagers

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix B

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A

participating in the project.<sup>3</sup> While the original design specified that a smaller subgroup of participants would be interviewed, at this stage in the project I made the decision to invite all participating teenagers to be interviewed, all of whom agreed. The modification was made for two reasons. First, as I began to explore more deeply the method of hermeneutic phenomenology, I determined that interviews would provide optimal information for analysis, especially relative to survey data. Secondly, I determined that given the timelines and numbers involved it was feasible to conduct all ten interviews. Over the course of the follow up telephone calls, I set appointments for interviews. In one case, parents asked to meet with me first to learn more about the project, a meeting that was held in my parish office during which participation was confirmed and dates for interviews established.

*Pre-Test Interviews:* The interviews included meeting with families in their homes (5) or at the church facility (2). While I had planned for all interviews to be conducted before the beginning of Lent (Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2012), two household visits, which included 6 interviews (3 parents and 3 teens), were made on Saturday, February 25, after Ash Wednesday and before the First Sunday of Lent. All 10 participating teenagers were interviewed. In only one case were both parents interviewed. In all, three fathers and seven mothers were interviewed. All interviews in the study were digitally recorded and later transcribed. In each interview consent to participate was sought and received, the option to pass on any question was communicated, and confidentiality and anonymous quotation was

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<sup>3</sup> Those who did not participate were not a surprise to me. They are teenagers who, though they attend worship with some regularity, do not participate regularly in youth programs or other parish events. All 10 participating teenagers are regularly active in a number of facets of parish life, including youth programs.

assured. In the interviews I utilized interview instruments developed by myself in consultation with my thesis adviser. A separate, though complimentary set of questions was posed to parents and teenagers.<sup>4</sup> Keeping with the methodology of open-ended questions that would lead participants to diverse, thick responses, the interview instruments were designed to provide a framework, often requiring probing and follow-up questions specific to the participants. Generally, parents were asked questions regarding family participation in church, faith activities in the home, conversation with children about matters of faith and spirituality, and hopes for children's spiritual life in the future. Generally, the youth responded to questions about participation in church, spirituality (connecting with God), faith activities in the home, spiritual experiences with family, and conversations with family and friends about matters of faith. In this initial interview, an in-depth orientation to the project was provided, which included an introduction to the *Lectio Divina* resource that I had developed (left with participants in hard copy format, see below), an explanation of expectations for participation, and an opportunity for participants to ask questions.

*Follow-up Email: Direction to Survey:* Shortly following the pre-test interview, an email<sup>5</sup> was sent to each household thanking them for their participation, directing them toward the online survey, and alerting them to an attached *Lectio Divina* resource (already left with each household in hard-copy). Two separate survey formats were used, one for parents and the other for youth. Parents completed The

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix C (Parents) and Appendix D (Youth).

<sup>5</sup> Appendix E.



Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) developed by Lynn Underwood as well as the Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS) developed by David Dollahitte and Nathaniel Lambert, both referenced above in Chapter 2.<sup>6</sup> I added two questions/statements under the heading “Talking about Faith” (TAF), following the same scale as the DSES, which seeks frequency from “never” to “every day.” Participants were asked in TAF to respond to the following statements: “I speak to my family about my faith,” and “I speak to my friends about my faith.” Thus, the parents were invited to complete DSES, TAF, and FAITHS and the teenagers were invited to complete a separate survey comprised of only DSES and TAF. All teenagers completed the online survey. Twelve out of a possible 16 parents, at least one from each household, also completed the survey that was developed for them.

*Lectio Divina during Lent 2012:* Each of the participating households was provided with both a printed and digital copy of a *Lectio Divina* resource, developed by me especially for the project, which was entitled, “In the Presence of God: Slowing things Down in Households of Faith – A Resource for *Lectio Divina* in Homes during Lent 2012.”<sup>7</sup> Although in the initial interviews a thorough orientation to *Lectio Divina* and the project was offered, the resource, structured to be used with ease and flexibility, included the following features:

- A note of introduction was addressed to all members of the parish in that the resource was available and intended for use in all households during

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<sup>6</sup> As indicated in Chapter 2 (n. 11) both surveys have been used with permission. Each can be found in this thesis in the appendices: Daily Spiritual Experience Scale, Appendix F; and Faith Activities in the Home Scale, Appendix G.

<sup>7</sup> Included in its entirety as Appendix H.

the season of Lent. It also explained that I would be working closely with certain households that were participating in the thesis project.

- *Lectio Divina* was introduced and explained briefly, including a simple guide for use in a group that followed the pattern used for a number of years in the parish. This guide developed by me follows closely the pattern of *Lectio Divina* as made available by Luke Dysinger, an internet resource to which participants were directed for more information.<sup>8</sup>
- While a set format for *Lectio Divina* is presented, it is acknowledged in the resource that each family is very likely to find their own rhythm and a number of examples are offered to encourage households in doing so, particularly in terms of conversation or silence, movement or stillness, place and time of day. Participants are reminded of the following pattern of *Lectio Divina* in its simplest form: Read a passage from the Bible.... Be silent ... Read it again ... Be silent ... Read it again ... Be silent ... Say a prayer.
- Participants are encouraged to do *Lectio Divina* 1 to 3 times a week.
- For each week in Lent three readings from scripture are printed and laid out on a single page. Two of the passages are from the upcoming Sunday in *The Revised Common Lectionary*,<sup>9</sup> selected by myself from four possible readings, chosen in consideration of ease of understanding and length. The third reading for each week was selected by me and taken from the parables of Jesus. Participants were again encouraged to be flexible in using the readings. For example, the same reading could be used all week or a different reading could be used for each session of *Lectio Divina*.

*Invitation to Youth to Describe a Lectio Divina Experience:* During the season of Lent I intentionally left families to their own devices in terms of doing *Lectio Divina* (that is, unless they had questions, of which there were none). One significant exception to this rubric was on March 12, three weeks into Lent, when I sent an email to each participating teenager (copying parents) requesting that he or she provide me with a written, detailed description of one particular *Lectio Divina*

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<sup>8</sup> Luke Dysinger, "Accepting the Embrace of God: the Ancient Art of *Lectio Divina*," Updated September 12, 2005, *Valyermo Benedictine*. <http://www.valyermo.com>, [Accessed August 14, 2007].

<sup>9</sup> Consultation on Common Texts, *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Winfield, BC: Woodlake Books, 1992).

experience.<sup>10</sup> The plan for this additional information from the teenagers emerged late in the research design and so it was made clear that the requested description was over and above what the teens had already agreed to in terms of participation in the project. All 10 teens wrote and submitted to me by email the requested description, which along with the post-test interviews proved invaluable to the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis and description at the heart of this thesis project.

*Post Test Interviews and Survey:* On Good Friday, April 6, I sent an email<sup>11</sup> to participating parents informing them of the next steps of their household's involvement in the project. The first was to complete in the same format the online survey used prior to the beginning of Lent. The same 12 parents completed the second round of surveys and 9 of the 10 youth completed a survey. The second step was the participation of parents and teenagers in a second round of interviews. In the days following the "Next Steps" email, I telephoned each household and made arrangements for the interviews, that were held in homes and at the church facility between April 19 and 25. The rate of participation remained consistent, all 10 teenagers were interviewed and the same 3 fathers and 7 mothers were interviewed. As in the initial interviews, I established parameters of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity and then followed with an interview instrument developed by me in consultation with my thesis adviser. A separate,

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<sup>10</sup> Appendix I is a sample of the email in which I provide suggestions to guide the detail of the written experience.

<sup>11</sup> Appendix J.

though complimentary set of questions was posed to parents and teenagers.<sup>12</sup> The open ended questions in this round for the teenagers focused largely on their experience of *Lectio Divina* in their household with their parents as well as how the experience made them feel and think about family, God, and faith. The parents were asked similar questions about the practice of *Lectio Divina* in their household as well as how it impacted their relationship with their children and whether they could imagine doing *Lectio Divina*, or something like it, again in the future. By the end of April 2012 all surveys and interviews for the thesis project were completed.

### *Matters of Methodology Revisited*

In Chapter 2 I outlined in detail my search for a method to guide this thesis project. Set in the broader context of congregational leadership, my search enabled me to simultaneously focus on a specific and narrow research question (namely, what is the essence of the lived experience of youth doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents?) and to discover a qualitative research method that was suitable for the project and could be rigorously followed (namely, hermeneutic phenomenology). I also introduced the principle of emergent design as a characteristic of qualitative research and offered a quote by John Creswell. At this stage I present that quote again within Creswell's longer description of emergent design:

The process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and

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<sup>12</sup> Appendix K (Youth) and Appendix L (Parents) are samples of the interview tools used in the post test interviews.

begin to collect data. For example, the questions may change, the forms of data collection may shift, and the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified. The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information.<sup>13</sup>

Emergent design was most definitely a reality within this research project, as much because of the nature of qualitative research as my own inexperience. The primary modifications within the emergent design were a result of the refinement of the research question as hermeneutic phenomenology was adopted. Thus, as the question became more narrowly focused on the lived experience of the participating teenagers, the primary field notes to be used in the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis became the post-test interviews with the teenagers that explored their experience and the written descriptions of their experience that they provided upon my request mid-way through Lent. The pre-test interviews with the teenagers and both the pre-test and post-test interviews with the parents provided me with a greater understanding of the specific contexts in which the teenagers live, offering a glimpse through the postmodernity of Doehring's tri-focal lens. Being able to sit and talk with the parents and teens, most often in their own homes, about matters of faith, church involvement, family relationships, hopes and aspirations deepened my relationships with the participants, and broadened my capacity as an interpretive guide as described by Osmer.<sup>14</sup> For example, many of the vignettes that begin each

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<sup>13</sup> Creswell, 39.

<sup>14</sup> Osmer, 18-20. See also the broader discussion concerning the insights of both Doehring and Osmer in Chapter 2.

chapter of this thesis are informed and shaped by the interviews with both parents and teens.

Again, as indicated in Chapter 2, the online surveys used as pre-test and post-test instruments did not allow for a significant enough period to measure real change over time. Also, while the surveys are sound they do not address the specific question that emerged in the evolving design of this project thesis. Thus, similar to the interviews with the parents and the pre-test interview with the teens they have helped to broaden my capacity for interpretation, though much of the information gathered now lies outside the specificity of the research design. The results of the pre-test survey are nonetheless included in the appendices of this thesis.<sup>15</sup> The call for participants to complete the online surveys, the result of which would not largely inform the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, represents the most significant modification in the emergent design of the research project. That said, the FAITHS survey completed by parents in the pre-test segment of the project provides a “snap-shot” in time that with other information from the interviews contributes to understanding the context for the experience of *Lectio Divina* in participating households.

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<sup>15</sup> Appendix O

### *Listening to Parents: An Exercise in Semiformal Attending*

As outlined in Chapter 2, Richard Osmer considers priestly listening an essential task of practical theology and an important discipline for congregational leaders.<sup>16</sup> He frames this listening in a “Continuum of Attending,”<sup>17</sup> between informal attending and formal attending. Osmer places semiformal attending midway along the continuum. The formal attending of this thesis is the hermeneutic phenomenological study of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents (see the next chapter).

In this section, I briefly outline some of the key insights gained from the interviews with the parents as well as the FAITHS survey that they completed in the pre-test segment of the project. I present these insights not as rigorous analysis, like that which will follow when exploring the lived experience of the participating teenagers, but rather as an exercise of semiformal attending consistent with Osmer’s continuum. While the survey and the interviews with parents provided considerable information on a range of topics, the questions I consider below are only a few that pertain specifically to the activity of *Lectio Divina*.

*Lectio Divina represented a significant introduction of spiritual practice into all participating households.*

*Lectio Divina* includes the reading of scripture as well as silent and spoken prayer. I reviewed the FAITHS survey results with specific attention to activities of family prayer and scripture reading. Of the 12 parents who participated in the pre-test

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<sup>16</sup> Osmer, 31-37.

<sup>17</sup> Osmer, 37-39.

segment of the survey, 50% indicated their households never participate in family prayer other than at meals, 25% do so yearly or a few times a year, and the remaining 25% do so monthly or a few times a month.<sup>18</sup> Of those parents that indicated they do pray at family meals (singing or saying a blessing, grace, or prayer), one third indicated they do so daily. In terms of reading scripture as a family, 50% never do and 41.7% do so yearly or a few times a year, and 8.3% do so a few times a month.<sup>19</sup> When asked how often they pray with their child or listen to the child's prayer, 83.3% of parents indicated they never do, 8.3% indicated they do so yearly or a few times a year, and 8.3% did indicate doing so on a daily basis.<sup>20</sup> I found these indicators congruent with my observations and anecdotal evidence as the Rector of the congregation.

Much of the above data from the FAITHS survey was reinforced during the pre-test interviews with parents. When asked about of what sort of faith activities went on in their household, there was no reference to reading the bible together as a family. While most parents made reference to saying grace at meals, at least occasionally, there was no acknowledgment of frequent family prayer, though one parent did mention meal activities during Advent and Lent. One parent when asked about faith activities within the family said, "Well not so much on a daily basis – I guess it's more around events of the time and an example would be when [my mother-in-law] was sick, we often said prayers together at that point." Another

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix O below, page 190 below.

<sup>19</sup> Of the 12 survey participants, 8.3% represent one parent. See Appendix O, page 191 below.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix O, page 194 below.



parent responded to the question about family faith activities by stating, “Not really, cause for me it’s still very private.” This same parent did remember times of bible reading and prayer in the pre-teen lives of the children, an activity fondly recalled by other parents, one remembering “When they were younger and I was putting them to bed we always said a bedtime prayer.” One parent said, “I wouldn’t say we pray, um together.” Another said, “We don’t really pray together.”

*Conversations regarding matters of faith between parents and teenagers are common within participating households, though varied in frequency and subject matter.*

All parents interviewed in the pre-test segment of the project volunteered, or identified easily with prompting questions, conversations with their teenagers regarding matters of faith<sup>21</sup>. One parent explicitly responded to the question regarding faith activities in the home with the following statement, “Well, it’s not really an activity we just talk about those issues. We’ve always talked a lot about what it is to follow Jesus’ teachings, what it is to be Christian in this world, how you deal with the dissonance.” Another parent responded to the same question by saying, “I try to talk to them a little bit on a day to day basis, more incorporating it into a ... not daily life, but just ongoing as opposed to formal- we don’t sit and read the bible. We talk about it a bit and we talk about [the way] it teaches us things.”

Other parents responded to questions about conversations with their children concerning faith in a moral or ethical framework. One parent put it this way, “Yeah, see it’s not direct. It’s never direct. ... We don’t go into major discussion about anything to do with the Bible, it’s more along the lines of just Christianity and just

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<sup>21</sup> See also Appendix O, page 192 below.

being a good person.” Another parent when considering family time in the wilderness as a shared, though unspoken closeness with God said, “the conversations get around to things like conservation and trying to tread lightly on the earth so I guess that’s where a lot of my spirituality is rooted in terms of looking after the earth.” And another parent reflecting upon the nature of conversations with teenage children offered the following, “That’s [conversations about faith, prayer, and God] usually around service, it’s not around prayer. Like serving the world right; that for me is big so I think that’s what I’ve got into him, but I think that by doing things he can learn to be a better person and by watching me do things [he comes to] know that it’s good to give up yourself or of yourself.” In retrospect, these responses were consistent with my expectations, particularly of the researcher-identified, self-selected group of participant parents.

The nature of the conversations remembered by parents varied, some explicitly about faith, others more cautious and indirect. One parent after reflecting upon the conviction that children ought to make their own choices regarding faith remarked, “this is a poor phrase, but I don’t want to ram in down their throats. ... I don’t think that works and I would rather have them come to their beliefs and religion kind of on their own rather than being forced or corrected in a certain manner.” Another parent recalled a recent conversation; “I had a conversation recently with Elizabeth about how important [her faith] was to her. She initiated [the conversation] to just say that she believed in God and some of it was in the context of her friends and ... how she doesn’t really party [and get into] high risk behaviours.”

*Parents in participating households enjoyed the experience of Lectio Divina at home, though many identified time constraints and scheduling as the primary obstacle to doing Lectio Divina.*

During the post-test interviews parents generally expressed enjoyment in doing *Lectio Divina* and most identified the challenges of busyness and scheduling. One parent said, "I thought it was good. I mean I felt good doing it. I felt it was actually good to have the discussion, in terms of the question about how did God touch you today." This same parent also said, "Uh schedules; that was a big, huge obstacle." Another parent took enjoyment from the eagerness of teen involvement, "I enjoyed it in the sense ... not necessarily the content, but more the receptiveness to it and the participation." Similarly this parent would say, "The only obstacle was that you would literally forget [to practice *Lectio Divina*], you would just get wrapped up in what you are doing." Likewise, another parent said, "we'd forget" and yet expressed the following when *Lectio Divina* was done; "I thought it was a great opportunity to make a point of taking time to sit together and that was what I really wanted out of it too, to sit with Miriam." And another parent responded to the question regarding obstacles to doing *Lectio Divina* with the straightforward response, "simply time and scheduling" and would go on to say about the experience in general, "What did I feel? It felt calm, it felt very - like it felt right. It was lovely to sit down with the kids and have a structured approach especially during Lent." Finally one parent offered the following, "Life got busy, but the intent - when we first started, it became a routine. It worked out good, but we did get away from it towards the end because the three of us were off in different directions, it was crazy." This same parent also said of *Lectio Divina*, "This is the first time I've done this as a family and I got a good

feeling from it. I enjoyed doing it. ... I thought it was a good family thing to talk about and read the passages and try to get something out of it.

*Parents could imagine continuing with Lectio Divina on a less frequent basis, and more likely at different times of the year, supported by the initiative and resources of the parish.*

In the post-test interview I asked parents if they could imagine continuing with *Lectio Divina* and I most often followed up with a question to determine what sort of support the parish could provide. Parents from two households responded that some members of the family had made plans to continue on a weekly basis. One parent when responding to the question about the likelihood of continuing *Lectio Divina* summed up the sentiments of most other parents when saying, "Possibly, but it wouldn't be frequent." Another parent responded, "Not regularly. Maybe at certain times in the year we could try it." And yet another said, "Probably at different times of the year." One parent framed the response around holidays, "I can't imagine doing it regularly, but it would be good to be mindful of it [at] certain times of the year and to set [it] up as [a] routine around different holidays or calendar times." While most parents responded in the affirmative when I followed up with the idea of doing *Lectio Divina* in Advent and Lent, one parent named those times specifically without prompting, "I think we could do it [at] different times of the year. I don't know we'd do it every week, but we could definitely do it in blocks – like in Advent and in Lent."

Parents also acknowledged the usefulness of the *Lectio Divina* resource during the project and anticipated that a similar resource in the future would be helpful and serve as an impetus to continuing spiritual practice as a family. One parent

said, “I think resources helped. The directions were straight forward, but it’s having that kind of structured thing, I’m better with structure ... then just going, ‘Oh, let’s do that.’” Another parent remarked about the resource, “That’s a big help ... yup, having the booklet that you gave us, just having it there [helped us to remember].”

Some parents named that they participated in *Lectio Divina* in order to support me in my studies and by extension the importance of leadership initiative from the parish to encourage families to engage in spiritual practices at home. One parent said, “Well we’d need somebody to initiate it – to give a helping hand ... in a bulletin or an email or [if] somebody presented a reading [resource].” Another parent summed up the needed ingredients for doing *Lectio Divina* in the future, “What would help is acknowledging a certain time of year is coming up and to have certain readings provided so we wouldn’t have to go looking for anything, the resourcing would be helpful and then again what’s really helpful is the inspiration, someone to drive it, someone to say, ‘let’s do this.’”

I asked one parent, with whom I have enjoyed open and frank conversations over many years, “So to be clear the reason [*Lectio Divina*] happened [in your household] was because of the commitment to help me out [with my research project]” and the response was immediate and direct “Absolutely.” As the interview was drawing to a close, the same parents remarked

... but to your point, it was actually something that yeah we wouldn’t have done spontaneously if it weren’t, you know, if you didn’t say, ‘hey I’m doing this [a research project], can you help?’ So we were committed to make sure of it, but so [then] you get this unexpected – well you don’t know what to expect right – and you get actually a very good – I thought it was very good – outcome.

*Bringing the Method Home: A Final Exercise in Bracketing*

I spend most of my time on the informal side of the continuum of attending. I strive to listen deeply to the people I am called to serve as a pastor and priest, as I hope most congregational leaders do. Telephone calls and visits, chance conversations with parents at the end of Junior Choir practice, quiet moments when seeking the counsel of a parish elder, open debate at parish council, the examples could go on and on of the manner in which I have received the input and wisdom of others, shaping my ministry as a pastor over many years. From time to time, as Osmer's frame would encourage, the pastor often working with a team, will move into an act of semiformal attending. Targeted and focused conversations, or even questionnaires and surveys that address particular questions around specific ministries and programs, have also played a role in ministry development in the places I have served as a congregational leader. Most often, these efforts have been semiformal attending more than formal attending and vice versa. Indeed, little attention is given to methodological rigour in the pragmatics of priestly listening.

The pre-test surveys and both interviews with the parents very much fall in line with the kind of priestly listening in which I have engaged as a congregational leader when moving away from simply informal attending, that is, it is more semiformal than formal. Having folks complete a survey and answer some questions in a context of conversations and then drawing some conclusion about how to respond in ministry falls short of formal attending and rigorous research, qualitative or quantitative. Yet, it can very much bear fruit that will last. The previous section was

an exercise in semiformal attending and it offered a glimpse into the households of families, insight into the intimacy with which pastors are granted privileged access. Semiformal attending demonstrated what the participating families in this study are actually doing in terms of spiritual practice and faith formation, and what is not being done. It revealed openness to trying new things and gives a sense of how a parish might partner more closely with households in cultivating spiritual practices in homes. Some of these possibilities will be discussed more fully in the final chapter of the thesis. It is sufficient that, based on listening to parents in a semiformal manner, ideas and initiatives can be developed that will encourage Harmony, who was featured in this chapter's opening vignette, in her desire to place God before all else in her busy adolescent life.

The listening to the parents falls short of formal attending, despite the insights and gains it might realize. As the process and procedures of this thesis project evolved within the characteristic of emergent design at play in qualitative research, the method of hermeneutic phenomenology was adopted which resulted in a specific question to be asked at the heart of this project. It is also important to note that what the parents had to say about their experiences of *Lectio Divina* had to be carefully set aside, bracketed, to honour the phenomenological methodology I chose. As a researcher stepping into the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, I was called to articulate the presuppositions and consciousness I brought to the question. In striving to be transparent and in a spirit of intellectual discipline I name the social science that has shaped my thinking in coming to the question and the theological reflection that guides me to be concerned about teenagers, their households, and the

future of the church. I also outline the methodological steps taken to discover the question and the conversations I have had with those nearest to the teenagers at the heart of the question. So, all that set aside, bracketed, I wonder what is the lived experience of teenagers such as Harmony doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. To that question specifically I now turn.



## Chapter Six

### LECTIO DIVINA AT HOME: THE ACT OF MINISTRY

*“What about Saturday at 10:00 a.m.?” I asked, suggesting a third possible time for an interview, easily one of the most challenging elements of organizing this thesis project. “That will work! Ah, maybe not, I’ll have to check with Frank,” said the voice of a busy mom on the other end of the phone, who then exclaimed, “Look! We will just make it work.” “Are you sure,” I said, “I can relate, trying to get it all in, your house sounds like ours.” She replied, “I know, we are all crazy. It will work. See you then.” After more than ten years in the parish, I had come to know the people very well, especially the parents of the youth participating in this study, for my own children are part of their cohort. In fact, one of my children is a high school student and a participant in this study. A friend and mentor introduced me to Lectio Divina in 2005. Since then, it has been a regular part of my own spiritual practice and something I have also introduced to many others: students I have taught at seminary as an adjunct professor, adult parishioners on evenings in Advent and Lent, young adults on road trips, and teenagers during Confirmation classes and youth gathering. Lectio Divina has been for me a time of quiet reflection in which all in a group regardless of age, education, or place can engage the scripture and be community, no matter how small that community may be in an age of remnant church. I had, however, never myself done it at home with my own family. Yet now I was asking others to do it in their households on my behalf, which they gladly did: an honour and measure of our mutual affection. What is more, as families struggled to find time to be interviewed by me and then to do Lectio Divina, my own family would face the very same challenges. For in this project, I would be priest and pastor, student and researcher, and I would also be Dad.*

John Creswell states that the first step in a phenomenological analysis is for the researcher to describe “his or her own experience of the phenomenon.”<sup>1</sup> As the above vignette illustrates, I have had significant experience with *Lectio Divina* over many years in a number of contexts; though it has been a craft and spiritual practice handed on more than a subject studied and researched. I have not, however, practiced *Lectio Divina* in my own household with my own family, my children all teenagers. While I did not complete an online survey, though my wife did, and I was not interviewed, I was certainly a family participant. Naming my involvement is

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<sup>1</sup> Creswell, 159.

part of the study, for Creswell it is part of the process of phenomenological analysis. After the bracketing of the previous chapters, this chapter now fully engages the work of hermeneutic phenomenology. The initial section explains the process followed and outlines the nuances of my own approach and procedure relative to literature on hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. The subsequent sections follow the method as described in light of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

### *Steps and Procedures of Analysis*

Lynn Butler-Kisber states, “phenomenologists are reluctant to outline a guide for inquiry for fear of making what is a non-linear and imaginative process prescriptive.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Max Van Manen contends, “in the practice of human science research [i.e. hermeneutic phenomenology] the various methodical activities cannot really be performed in isolation.”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, John Creswell in his discussion of phenomenology acknowledged various methods and procedures within the discipline.<sup>4</sup> Both Butler-Kisber and Creswell do advance a specific methodology to be followed when conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study<sup>5</sup> and both provide examples of studies that deviate, if only a little, from their

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<sup>2</sup> Butler-Kisber, 50.

<sup>3</sup> Van Manen, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Creswell, 58-60, 62, 159-160, 187-188.

<sup>5</sup> Butler-Kisber, 53; and Creswell, 159.

own schema.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, in reviewing Van Manen and particularly Butler-Kisber and Creswell certain methodological steps and procedures are identifiable within the phenomenological process that are largely consistent across the discipline, which include:

- Identifying significant statements from the field texts
- Organizing the significant statements thematically
- Writing an exhaustive description of the phenomenon

It is in the second stage of organizing the significant statements thematically in which there is variance in method and procedure, both in terms of nomenclature and steps taken. Rather than compare and contrast the nuances of the various procedures in detail, what follows is a general explanation of the process I followed with reference to its rootedness within the literature concerning hermeneutic phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology.

- Read and re-read the field texts that pertain to the phenomenon being investigated.<sup>7</sup>
- Identify within the field texts significant statements that pertain to the lived experience of the phenomenon.<sup>8</sup> Identifying and extracting significant statements is a prolonged process of reflection. Van Manen suggests that there “are four existentials that may prove especially helpful as guides for reflection in the research process: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality); lived time (temporality), and human relation (relationality

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<sup>6</sup> Butler-Kisber, 54-59; and Creswell, 265-283.

<sup>7</sup> Butler-Kisber, 53.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; Creswell, 159; Van Manen, 92-95.

and communality).<sup>9</sup> As I read the field texts and identified significant statements, I was mindful of these four existentials, which would help in identification of meaning units (see below).

- Organize the significant statements into thematic groups called meaning units.<sup>10</sup> As I will illustrate in the next section, I provided a title that in a few words described the theme of each meaning unit.
- In reflecting upon the meaning units, write a few (1 to 4) descriptions “of what the participant experienced in the phenomenon.”<sup>11</sup> Creswell refers to these descriptions as textural descriptions and are intended to describe, “what happened.”<sup>12</sup>
- In reflecting upon the meaning units and textural descriptions write a few (1-4) interpretive descriptions of the participant’s experience of the phenomenon. Creswell includes a step in which a “structural description” is written that explains how the phenomenon was experienced.<sup>13</sup> Butler-Kisber includes an example in which formulated meanings (i.e. analogous to meaning units) are clustered into common themes.<sup>14</sup> In my own process, again as will be further illustrated in the next section, at this point I became

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<sup>9</sup> Van Manen, 101. See also, 102-106.

<sup>10</sup> Butler-Kisber, 53; Creswell, 159.

<sup>11</sup> Creswell, 159.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Butler-Kisber, 55-57.

more innovative in the introduction of the interpretive description in which my own reflection begins to formulate meaning by interpreting the experience relative to the significant statements and the textural description. Clearly, at this point in the process I am engaging in the interpretive element of hermeneutic phenomenology as discussed above Chapter 2.

- Extract the interpretive descriptions from the original meaning units and with fresh eyes and reflection organize them into interpretive clusters. This step is closely aligned with what one of Butler-Kisber examples names as “Clusters of Common Themes.”<sup>15</sup>
- Drawing on the descriptions within the interpretive clusters write an exhaustive description, typically a paragraph in length, of the participant’s lived experience of the phenomenon. The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology as a qualitative research method is to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon being studied. Creswell uses the term “essence”<sup>16</sup> whereas Butler-Kisber uses “exhaustive description,”<sup>17</sup> which I have adopted. The exhaustive description is a composite<sup>18</sup> of the phenomenon as experienced across the participants<sup>19</sup> and represents the culmination of the phenomenological process.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>16</sup> Creswell, 159.

<sup>17</sup> Butler-Kisber, 53.

<sup>18</sup> Creswell, 159.

<sup>19</sup> Butler-Kisber, 53.

Across the literature I reviewed, the procedures taken in the phenomenological process are similar, yet there are enough differences in steps and nomenclature to cause confusion. A researcher thus needs to be clear, precise, and consistent in the steps followed in his or her analysis. At the risk of being redundant, therefore, below in summary are the steps and nomenclature I adopted in my analysis:

- *Read and re-read* field texts
- Extract *Significant Statements* from field text
- Organize Significant Statements into *Meaning Units*
- Write 1 to 4 *Textural Descriptions* for each Meaning Unit
- Write 1 to 4 *Interpretive Descriptions* for each Meaning Unit
- Organize the Interpretive Description into *Interpretive Clusters*
- Write an *Exhaustive Description* of the phenomenon

It is important to emphasize the sentiment named at the beginning of the section that this process is non-linear and that the steps taken cannot be isolated, despite the listing offered above. There is fluidity to hermeneutic phenomenology analysis such that the researcher moves within the various steps in a process of reflection, reading, writing, re-reading, and re-writing. In addition, the meaning units are not mutually exclusive, though there are no repetitions. Thus, for example, some significant statements could have been placed in another meaning unit, as well some of the interpretive descriptions are informed in part by insights gained in other meaning units. What follows in this chapter is the description of the method, steps taken, and the results of my hermeneutic phenomenological exploration of the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

### *Texts, Significant Statements, Meaning Units and Descriptions*

The field texts that comprised the primary data for this study were the post-test interviews with the 10 participating teenagers and the written descriptions of a *Lectio Divina* event that each of them submitted to me.<sup>20</sup> Over the course of many weeks during the spring and summer of 2012, I read and re-read these key texts, often setting them aside for a few days in order to reflect upon themes and images beginning to emerge. In time I sat with the texts over a course of three intensive days and identified significant statements simultaneously organizing them into meaning units by using various coloured highlighting markers. In all, 150 significant statements were identified and organized into 9 meaning units. In a process that again involved reading, reflection, and re-reading, I wrote 1-4 textural descriptions for each meaning unit, striving to focus clearly on the purely descriptive “what happened” within the *Lectio Divina* experience. After a period of three days in which I set the significant statements and textural descriptions aside, I again went through a similar process, this time writing 1 to 4 interpretive descriptions for each meaning unit, bringing explicitly the interpretive quality into the process. The results are captured in a table that was created during the time period of this segment of the analysis.<sup>21</sup> What follows for the remainder of this section are extracts from that table in which the meaning units are named, textural description presented,

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<sup>20</sup> The written descriptions can be read in their entirety in Appendix M.

<sup>21</sup> Appendix O

followed by examples of significant statements in narrative form, and then a presentation of the interpretive descriptions.

### Meaning Unit: Setting/Spatiality

#### Textural Descriptions: Setting/Spatiality

- Settings for *Lectio Divina* varied according to each family: the dinner table, family and living rooms, bedrooms and cars.
- For some it was a family event with both parents and all children of the household. For others it was one parent and the participating youth.
- With rare exceptions, *Lectio Divina* took place in the evening.

#### Examples of Significant Statements: Setting/Spatiality

Harmony, featured in the previous chapter, was not the only participant who did *Lectio Divina* in an automobile; Elizabeth, a grade 11 student, remarked, “on certain days me and my dad would do [*Lectio Divina*] in the car on the way to school.” More often Elizabeth said when “we participated as a family we would do it in our living room, and it would usually be all of us, so me, my dad, my mom, my sisters.”

Margaret, whose sister Martha was also a participant offered this description, “Late in the evening, my father, mother, sister and I gather together in a quiet room in the house. We spread out on the living room couch and settle in our usual places.”

Paul whose brother James was also a participant described a common scene in their home, “We were in the kitchen at the dinner table, it was usually after dinner.”

For some teenagers, such as Michael, introduced in an earlier chapter, *Lectio Divina* was experienced with only one family member, a parent: “We usually do



[*Lectio Divina*] in my Mom's room, at around 10 at night. I sit quietly and Mom reads." Similarly, Miriam offers the following description of time with her mother, "Doing *Lectio Divina* is just my mom and me, we usually do it in the evening in the living room on our couch when it is just the two of us in that area."

#### Interpretive Descriptions: Setting/Spatiality

- *Lectio Divina* was experienced in intimate family spaces that were safe and familiar.
- Home based *Lectio Divina* brought a spiritual practice into family spaces of everyday lived experience, even automobiles.
- *Lectio Divina* was a shared experience between family members who together had a willingness to engage in a spiritual practice at home.

#### Meaning Unit: Connection with Family/Relational

##### Textural Descriptions: Connection with Family/Relational

- Youth expressed feeling a closeness and connection with their families during *Lectio Divina*.
- Youth easily spoke about scripture and God with their parents.
- Youth appreciated hearing the insights and viewpoints of others in their family.
- Youth acknowledged that although easy and enjoyable, speaking with their parents and other family members about scripture was something rare.

##### Examples of Significant Statements: Connection with Family/Relational

Margaret offered the following insight about her experience and interaction with her parents and sister, "I love hearing what everyone has to say. It is not necessarily the same things I mention, but I feel they are equally true and illuminating. I feel that

I benefited from the insight of my mother, father, and sister, just as much from my own personal meditations.” Her younger sister Martha was rather matter of fact, “We just did it, it wasn’t like it was a difficult thing to do or an easy thing to do, it was just reading the Bible and meditating. ... I feel ... closer to ... my family.”

Esther, a grade 9 student, reflected on her experience, “I enjoyed the time with my family talking about God. ... So like, the time we spent together doing [*Lectio Divina*] makes me feel good because I know we’re still all a family and everything.” Harmony said that it “was easy to find things to talk about with most of the Bible readings that we did.” In her written description of *Lectio Divina*, Harmony wrote about a conversation with her mother when they were considering Jesus in the temple confronting the money changers: “One phrase we both agreed stood out ... was ‘Stop making my father’s house a market-place.’ We both agreed that in our society many people push God aside or ‘forget God’ [because they think that] what they believe is ‘more important’ (such as making money).” Paul expressed that “[I like] being with my family and talking about stuff we don’t usually talk about.” Paul’s brother James provided a number of insights into his family, “I was thinking to myself that this was a good experience for our family because we all shared thoughts and parts of our days and after I felt better ... I had a better understanding of the family members.” Commenting on the exchanges during *Lectio Divina* as it relates to scripture, James said, “like the part we were at said ‘How did you see God today’ ... it was cool the fact that some people said stuff and you were like, ‘Hmmm same thing.’”

Judith, after describing relaxed sessions of *Lectio Divina* in a quiet, dim lit living room with both her parents would say, “It was different because I don’t really talk to [my parents] that much about [my faith].” Harmony offered a similar sentiment, “It was different because I’m not used to ... talking with my Mom about religious things and stuff.” Michael when asked about doing a similar spiritual practice on his own responded, “It’s kind of nicer with my mom.”

#### Interpreted Descriptions: Connection with Family/Relational

- *Lectio Divina* in homes fostered a welcomed experience of familial intimacy, especially with parents.
- As a spiritual practice in the home, *Lectio Divina* provided a context for youth to experience and share thoughts and insights about the divine, scripture and faith that is rare in other lived experience within families.

#### Meaning Unit: Reference to God and Scripture

##### Textural Descriptions: Reference to God and Scripture

- Through *Lectio Divina* with their families, youth actively engaged the scripture: asking questions, feeling called, offering insight.
- Youth gave voice to divine wonder, forgiveness, and justice – often seeking and experiencing the presence of God.
- The experience of God and engagement with scripture was often mediated through meditation, silence, and discussion.

##### Examples of Significant Statements: Reference to God and Scripture

Many participants provided short statements surrounding faith and spiritual experience. Esther said, “I felt like God will always forgive us even if we do

something really bad.” Paul simply said the he “felt closer [to God]” and was called “to be silent when others were talking.” After meditating upon, and considering a family discussion of Jesus’ parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, Martha simply declared, “God is definitely just.” After reading and discussing the story of Abram and Sarai being informed that a child would be born to them (Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16), Harmony recalled a conversation with her mother, “we both agreed that it’s ... amazing how God can do works like that because they were so old.” During a particularly difficult time for her family, Elizabeth welcomed the opportunity *Lectio Divina* provided, “it was just a good place to then connect with God and believe that he would help my family get through this time.”

On a number of occasions, the teenage participants provided longer reflection in light of their engagement with scripture. After reading and meditating on the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), Michael asked, “I wonder why God would choose the commandments he did, although I do not disagree with them. I believe I was called to follow them as they are what God deems ‘good’ and ‘proper.’” Judith wrote the following reflection after her encounter with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), “I felt God was calling me to be like the Samaritan; kind and generous no matter who is in need. ... The part that stood out for me was when Jesus told the lawyer to ‘go and do likewise’ (referring to the Good Samaritan), and I felt like that was what God was telling me [to do] with that passage.”

One of the readings for the fifth Sunday in Lent (John 12:20-33) included these words from Jesus in verse 24, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat fall into

the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

During the post-test interview, Miriam offered the following reflection:

Um, there was one reading. Something like when a seed is planted – when a seed is just a seed it’s not really anything and when the plant like kind of dies away it’s more. At first, like when you first think about it there’s like not that much to it and we [me and my mom] thought about it more and it was like, ‘Whoa there’s more.’ ... at first thought, there wasn’t much to it, it’s just like, a plant growing and then when you think about it more it’s like it can have more meaning to it. So ... well, ... like when you kind of give up something you can be helping, you know, like producing a lot more, being more.

In the final days of Lent, during Holy Week, when the passages turned to the passion narrative of Christ (including Mark 11:1-11; John 13:1-20; Luke 23:26-49), Martha in the post-test interview provided the following reflection in light of her *Lectio Divina* experience:

I was just meditative, kind of. Like I was just thinking about it – it’s a lot to take in. Jesus knew exactly what was coming right? And he was really brave because he knew, uh – as Dad said, ‘a man with a plan.’ He knew what was coming and then he just walked right into it. ... Yeah ... like you know every year [the story of Holy Week], but ... it’s a lot you know, ... for somebody to love you so unconditionally they would go out there like that. That’s a lot.

#### Interpretive Descriptions: Reference to God and Scripture

- *Lectio Divina* in the home provided youth with a dynamic experience of bringing their own spiritual quest to an encounter with the Christian tradition.
- During *Lectio Divina* and afterward, youth demonstrated a capacity to expressively articulate issues of ethics, theology, and religious experience.
- The interplay between reading scripture, silence, and spoken word embedded in *Lectio Divina* provided a context in which youth were comfortable to engage a spiritual practice on their own terms.

Meaning Unit: Calm, Relaxed, and Peaceful/Corporeality

Textural Description: Calm, Relaxed, and Peaceful/Corporeality

- Youth enjoyed a sense of calm, relaxation and peacefulness during *Lectio Divina*.

Examples of Significant Statements: Calm, Relaxed, and Peaceful/Corporeality

Like many of the other participants, Miriam wrote of *Lectio Divina* in terms of its calming effect, “During the whole time I feel calm and relaxed and more focused on the words that I’m reading and are being read to me.” Weeks later she would reflect in the post-test interview, “Um it gave you a moment to like not have to worry about all the other stuff you had to do, so I guess it was more like calm.”

Margaret would describe the feeling of coming to the end of *Lectio Divina* as one of being “calm and relaxed. Feeling fortified ... I am ready for the oncoming week.” Her sister Martha would simply describe the experience as, “tranquil.” Judith wrote of the experience, “after we finished keeping silence, we went on with our day, relaxed and renewed.” Michael offered this statement, “it would just be me and my Mom and she would read and then we would have moments of peace.” As the season of Lent progressed, Elizabeth explained one of the effects of *Lectio Divina* for her, “After [Lent went on] I really started to enjoy it because it was a good time to just sit there, be calm.”

Interpretive Description: Calm, Relaxed, and Peaceful/Corporeality

- *Lectio Divina* provided youth with a time and space in which a meditative and prayerful state could be achieved in the midst of lived experience that is often otherwise.

## Meaning Unit: Busyness/Temporal

### Textural Descriptions: Busyness/Temporal

- Overwhelmingly, youth acknowledged the busyness of their lives and that of their families.
- Busyness was a significant obstacle to scheduling time to do *Lectio Divina*.
- For some, *Lectio Divina* provided relief and respite from the stress.

### Examples of Significant Statements: Busyness/Temporal

As Harmony describes the context of her description, she writes of a time she and her mother did *Lectio Divina* in the car on the way to piano lessons, “We had just finished dinner, and it was after a stressful, busy day.” Later in the post-test interview, she would explain, “I had a hard time ... when we were supposed to be contemplating the scripture, just thinking of scripture and not thinking of where I’m going and what I have to do next during my day and ... just getting caught up in everything else that was going on.” Esther explains her life on the particular day that I interviewed her as being illustrative of the obstacles around doing *Lectio Divina*, “because ... of all the things we’ve been doing. I have so much homework – tonight I have four subjects to get done and ... my mom ... has baseball coming up so she’s at meetings like every night.”

Margaret who was cited above as describing *Lectio Divina* as a source of calm and relaxation offers this explanation of how her family condensed all three biblical texts into one session of *Lectio Divina* per week, “Um finding time ... was a bit trickier. Coordinating schedules so [to have] everyone’s not busy at that time. So, it was easier to ... set ... a time ahead of schedule [and] be like ‘we’re going to do it at

this point in time;’ making sure Mom wasn’t busy, Dad wasn’t busy, stuff like that. Doing it together – getting everyone ... getting everyone here.”

Elizabeth simply described her family in the following manner, “Yeah, there were lots of obstacles, we are a very busy family, I’m very busy, we’re all very busy. ... It’s hard to find time.” Yet, Elizabeth would implicitly acknowledge the calm of *Lectio Divina*, ... “it’s like after a really stressful day especially we could come home and we’d just sit here and [happily] do *Lectio Divina*.” In her written description of *Lectio Divina*, Elizabeth sets a context of a conflict between her and a sibling in which there was “name calling and rude things said,” yet, she goes on to write that, “it was the best *Lectio Divina* I ever had. After one of the worst nights of the year ... I think I truly needed that.”

#### Interpretive Descriptions: Busyness/Temporal

- In the midst of the fullness of life, often experienced as busyness, the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* required an intentional setting aside of time.
- Paradoxically, though busyness and its related stress was at times an inhibitor of its practice, *Lectio Divina* served as a counter balance and balm to the stress often caused by time constraints, hectic schedules, even conflict.

#### Meaning Unit: Pattern of *Lectio Divina*

##### Textural Descriptions: Pattern of *Lectio Divina*

- Within the general guidelines set forth for *Lectio Divina* each family found its own pattern, including:
  - More discussion than silence
  - More silence than discussion
  - Laughter
  - Lying still throughout
  - Engaging in household activities, moving about the house



- Frequency of *Lectio Divina* varied from one to three times per week

Examples of Significant Statements: Pattern of *Lectio Divina*

Esther offers the following description of the pattern of *Lectio Divina* in her household: "... my dad would do the dishes while my mom and I would sit at the table eating dessert. After we would read it [the passage] we kept silent for one minute and then read it again. We all take turns reading, first I would read, then my mom would read and third my dad would read."

Judith offers her own description of a quiet time, "We would sit down on the couches and I would recline my chair and lean back and then we would take turns reading it and then keep silence and then the first couple of times we used to ask the questions that were on the paper ... afterwards we just kind of held the silence because the questions had become known.

Both Paul and James described doing *Lectio Divina* at their family dinner table. While they followed the instructions, both acknowledged that there was more discussion; James would say, "it wasn't as silent as it was supposed to be" and Paul concurred in a separate interview "we talked a bit when it was supposed to be silent." Paul though said they "followed the instructions" and James said "we still had like a religious moment." Michael said, "we followed the description." Elizabeth quipped, "... we probably followed the description well ..." Martha remarked that her family "basically did what the paper [provided resource] said." while her sister Margaret offered a more detailed description, "We all take turns

reading from different versions of the Bible while others sit quietly, listening. Generally, Mom reads the most often and I the least, as I prefer to sit.”

Interpretive Description: Pattern of *Lectio Divina*

- *Lectio Divina*, as an externally provided resource and spiritual practice, provided a structure embedded in tradition that was easily followed and at times adapted.
- *Lectio Divina*, though a structured spiritual practice, was lived into by families, who brought their own unique household character into its practice: some preferring silence, others discussion, some stillness, others activity.

Meaning Unit: Expression of Enjoyment

Textural Description: Expression of Enjoyment

- Youth experienced *Lectio Divina* with their families as being very positive; it was for them fun and nice.

Examples of Significant Statements: Expression of Enjoyment

Margaret spoke for her family when she said, “I think we all liked it [*Lectio Divina*], we all wanted to do it, so we were all enthusiastic ...” Her sister Martha concurred, offering further reflection, “I liked thinking about God ... because I wouldn’t normally do that a lot. Well I do, but not reading the Bible and meditating on it like *Lectio Divina*. So it was nice to just take a moment ... you know.”

Miriam’s expression of enjoyment came in the context of the busyness of life, “Um yeah it was nice, not having to worry about – you had an excuse not to do all your other stuff for 20 minutes, not to have to think about the other stuff.” James put his enjoyment of *Lectio Divina* with his family very simply, “I found it was fun ... we had

some good laughs.” His brother Paul was similarly succinct, “Yeah we did it and it was fun.” Elizabeth reflecting upon *Lectio Divina* in the car on the way to school said, “it ... was a nice way to start the morning. Of her experience, Judith said, “It was nice.”

Interpretive Description: Expression of Enjoyment

- *Lectio Divina* in the home was for the youth a source of joy and fun.

Meaning Unit: Continuing *Lectio Divina*

Textural Descriptions: Continuing *Lectio Divina*

- Many youth expressed a desire to, and saw the value in, continuing a household practice of *Lectio Divina*.
- Those who did not express a desire to continue *Lectio Divina*, felt it was more a matter of not being able to find the time.

Examples of Significant Statements: Continuing *Lectio Divina*

When asked if she could imagine continuing with *Lectio Divina* at home, Margaret remarked, “I could see that as a possibility because we all liked it ... so we were thinking of continuing it even if it’s not like for a research project.” To the same question, Esther said, “It was something I’ve never done before. I would do it again.” James said, “Definitely, yeah. I’d like to. It’s fun, we had some good times so ...”

Elizabeth was reflective regarding the benefits it had for her and her family, “[*Lectio Divina* is] a time to be calm and just sit there and pray and I honestly thought we should do that more often because it helped everyone calm down. ... I really wouldn’t mind it be honest ... now that I’ve done *Lectio Divina* I actually don’t mind it, it’s good to do with your family sometimes.”

Miriam, who had expressed enjoyment in the over all experience, was in her words more realistic about *Lectio Divina* continuing in her household, “Um I don’t think it’ll get done a lot; at my house, no. Because it was hard enough doing it ... over the span of 5, 6, weeks, so I can’t see us ... trying to continue it. Like we could probably do it like whenever we thought about it, but that wouldn’t be very often, I don’t think. Yeah, it probably wouldn’t be realistic.” Harmony shared a similar sentiment to Miriam, though volunteered some future seasonal possibilities, “No, not on a regular basis. I can imagine doing it [*Lectio Divina*] sometimes, like maybe during Advent a couple of times; during Lent. But not on a regular basis.”

#### Interpretive Descriptions: Continuing Lectio Divina

- *Lectio Divina* was a positive and unique enough experience that the youth expressed a desire to continue practicing in their homes, with their family.
- The constructs of contemporary life are such that the continuation of *Lectio Divina* was, perhaps prophetically, questioned by some youth as not being realistic – most likely, if at all, on an episodic or seasonal basis.

#### Meaning Unit: Change or growth in faith or feeling and thinking about God

##### Textural Descriptions: Change or growth in faith or feeling and thinking about God

- While some youth expressed a change in their faith or feelings and thoughts about God, others did not.
- Youth did readily give expression to a deepening of their faith, gaining new insight to the nature of God, the value of silent meditation and the impact of encountering scripture through *Lectio Divina* at home.
- Most youth began to make a greater connection between their faith and their everyday lived experience.

- A few youth, while valuing the experience of *Lectio Divina* (i.e. the peacefulness or thinking about God) questioned the experience as divine or as impacting the rest of life.

Examples of Significant Statements: Change or growth in faith or Feeling and thinking about God

Esther, when asked about the impact of *Lectio Divina* on her life, exclaimed, “I learned a lot about ... God and ... the passages and everything and I learned a lot of life lessons.” She then illustrated her connection with God in the context of reflecting upon the impact of doing *Lectio Divina* with her family with the following story, “Okay, well I’m being picked on a lot at school and like I always feel like God’s always telling me that it’s going to be okay, ‘just talk to your family about it and they’ll call into the school.’ and they did, of course they did, but um yeah so he [God] was just there like supporting me and everything.”

James became expressive when considering the impact of *Lectio Divina*, “I think it’s changed me for the better, more positive because I feel like other people have the same thoughts as me ... so I feel more one with everybody else [in my family].” Yet, he also put his experience in the broader context of his faith prior to *Lectio Divina* in Lent, “it’s just that I already knew [about my faith and God’s love], like I always felt the same, [*Lectio Divina* has] just like bumped it up, there’s like more.” The reading prior to the first Sunday of Lent, a portion of the Noah narrative (Genesis 9:8-17), made a particular impact on James, “One time we were doing [*Lectio Divina*] and we read the passage ... about ... Noah’s Ark ... Yeah about the rainbow, yeah, yeah. And it said every time you see a rainbow, that’s my promise to you ... Right so ... I thought, that’s pretty cool because you know, I see rainbows a lot of the time, so

whenever I see one now I think of that.” James would further reflect on the experience of *Lectio Divina* and its impact, “Well, I feel more connected because ... now ... after all the passages I’ve read and everything - we read them over and over and over and like three times and silence and, you know, it sticks to you, especially like the rainbow thing, that sticks in my head all the time now, so now ... I feel closer to God.”

Judith, when asked if the *Lectio Divina* changed how she felt or thought about God, explained, “Not really how I feel about [God], but it was nice having ... that extra time to just like, connect instead of just being all busy and doing my homework the whole time. It was like a break.” Judith would reflect further about the experience, “[Just think about the reading and then comparing it with my life and stuff [was good]; [I felt connected] to God and Jesus and [my parents] too, yeah. I guess I saw their connection with God a bit too instead of at church, I’m never really with them [at church], when I’m at the altar [serving] or I come in later [from helping in the nursery].”

Harmony, who felt that the *Lectio Divina* experience made her “feel closer to God” with her mother, considered the impact of the spiritual practice when asked if the experience has changed how she thought or felt about God, “Um a bit because ... I’ve gone through and read the passages in the Bible before, but when you do it like with *Lectio Divina* because you’re reading it more than once ... it stays in your mind.”

When Elizabeth was asked about how her thoughts and feelings about God had changed, she replied, “I don’t know, me and God we were pretty tight before so, I don’t know.” She reflected further, “Hmmm, yeah, I guess, it like just made me

respect my religion more, because it's really sacred and you're either really religious or you're not, there's like no half ass religion. Like doing *Lectio Divina* made me ... appreciate my religion more and that I should respect it and learn more about it." Elizabeth offered the following about her experience of *Lectio Divina*, "I think what I got out of it most was the questions we were asked of how we see God in your life today or like what do you think God wanted you to do today, like I got the most out of that." Elizabeth further reflected, "I get that in Jesus' time, Bible time, there was a lot of proof that God existed, but like where's God been lately, like the past 100 years, like there's not stories about it, and so people have a lot of doubts about God, like not being here, because like you don't know, you just have to believe."

When Miriam was asked if doing *Lectio Divina* influenced how she felt or thought or acted about God, she replied, "Um for the half an hour or 20 minutes you were thinking more about what the reading was about or ... just like about God in general and then, but not so much after when you ... pushed on and you kept doing your day." When asked if *Lectio Divina* raised questions about her faith, Miriam responded, "Um, a little bit. You have to ... consider, do I actually believe in this story or like what parts of it are you going to believe and which parts are you going to read in between the lines and like what part of it [do] you want to follow?"

When asked if her faith or thoughts of God changed, Martha said, "I'm not quite sure that it did. Like I don't think it changed anything." In separate interviews, both Margaret and Paul would say, "I feel closer to God." When asked about his experience of God during *Lectio Divina*, Michael responded, "I suppose I did experience peace, I don't know if that's experiencing God though."

Interpretive Descriptions: Change or growth in faith or Feeling and thinking about God

- *Lectio Divina* at home provided the youth with a dynamic and rich spiritual experience – a connection with God as encountered in family, reflection, and sacred text.
- Though the language of “change of faith” was not ubiquitously accepted, *Lectio Divina* was experienced by youth as an enrichment of faith and feeling and thinking about God.
- *Lectio Divina* served as a means for most youth to see the divine at work in other aspects of lived experience.

*Interpretive Clusters*

The process outlined in the previous section took place over a span of weeks, the end result being the table of Appendix O. The textural and interpretive descriptions of that process were largely derived from the significant statements and the meaning units to which they are placed in Appendix O. However, as indicated above, at times the writing of the textural and interpretive descriptions took into consideration significant statements assigned to other meaning units. The simplest example of this is the textural description in the meaning unit entitled “Pattern of *Lectio Divina*” that references “laughter,” though the actual significant statement regarding laughter is found in the meaning unit entitled “Expression of Enjoyment.”<sup>22</sup> Likewise, for example, the meaning unit entitled “Reference to God and Scripture” was closely aligned with “Change or Growth in Faith or Feeling and

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<sup>22</sup> Significant statement 111 attributed to James, Appendix N.



thinking about God.” While this thematic overlap was minimal it nonetheless exemplifies the abstraction from the reality of a phenomenon involved in such a process. Van Manen calls for a “balancing of the research context by considering parts and whole”<sup>23</sup> and suggests that at “several points it is necessary to step back and look at the total, at the contextual given and how each of the parts needs to contribute toward the total.”<sup>24</sup> The next step in the process I followed was in part an acknowledgment of this tension between the parts and the whole as well as furthering the interpretive exercise inherent in hermeneutic phenomenology.

I extracted all of the interpretive descriptions from the table (i.e. Appendix N) and placed each one on a separate slip of paper with no reference to the meaning unit to which it was initially assigned. Placed on a large table top, I read, reflected, sorted, re-read, reflected and re-sorted the interpreted descriptions into thematic groupings I called “Interpretive Clusters.” Each interpretive cluster was assigned its own title. What follows are the interpretive clusters:

#### The Sanctity of Home – A Safe, Familiar Space to Encounter The Divine

- *Lectio Divina* was experienced in intimate family spaces that were safe and familiar.
- Home based *Lectio Divina* brought a spiritual practice into familial spaces of everyday lived experience, even automobiles.
- *Lectio Divina*, though a structured spiritual practice, was lived into by families, who brought their unique household character into its practice: some preferring silence, others discussion; some stillness, other activity.

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<sup>23</sup> Van Manen, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

### The Family Connected – Relationships of Trust, Openness, and Joy

- *Lectio Divina* was a shared experience between family members who together had a willingness to engage in a spiritual practice at home.
- *Lectio Divina* in the home was for the youth a source of joy and fun.
- *Lectio Divina* in homes fostered a welcomed experience of familial intimacy, especially with parents.
- *Lectio Divina* was a positive and unique enough experience that the youth expressed a desire to continue practicing in their homes, with their family.

### The Divine Presence – In Dialogue with God

- As a spiritual practice in the home, *Lectio Divina* provided a context for youth to experience and share thoughts and insights about the divine, scripture and faith that is rare in other lived experience within families.
- *Lectio Divina* in the home provided youth with a dynamic experience of bringing their own spiritual quest to an encounter with the Christian tradition.
- Though the language of “change of faith” was not ubiquitously accepted, *Lectio Divina* was experienced by youth as an enrichment of faith and feeling and thinking about God.
- During *Lectio Divina* and afterward, youth demonstrated a capacity to expressively articulate issues of ethics, theology, and religious experience.
- *Lectio Divina* served as a means for most youth to see the divine at work in many other aspects of lived experience.

### Integrating Space, Tradition, and Relationship – Bringing it all Together

- The interplay between reading scripture, silence, and spoken word embedded in *Lectio Divina* provided a context in which youth were comfortable to engage a spiritual practice on their own terms.
- *Lectio Divina* at home provided the youth with a dynamic and rich spiritual experience - a connection with God as encountered in family, silence, reflection, and sacred text.
- *Lectio Divina*, as an externally provided resource and spiritual practice, provided a structure embedded in tradition that was easily followed and at times adapted.

### Slowing things Down – The Tension of Calm within the Storms of Life

- *Lectio Divina* provided youth with a time and space in which a meditative and prayerful state could be achieved in the midst of lived experience that is often otherwise.
- In the midst of the fullness of life, often experienced as busyness, the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* required an intentional setting aside of time.
- Paradoxically, though busyness and its related stress was at times an inhibitor of its practice, *Lectio Divina* served as a counter balance and balm to the stress often caused by time constraints, hectic schedules, even conflict.
- The constructs of contemporary life are such that the continuation of *Lectio Divina* was, perhaps prophetically, questioned by some youth as not being realistic – most likely, if at all, on an episodic or seasonal basis.

#### *Exhaustive Description*

Over the course of two days, I put my mind to writing the exhaustive description. In doing so, I reviewed all the material I had generated to date: the significant statements, meaning units, textural descriptions, although I gave most attention to the interpretive clusters. While learnings, reflections, recommendations and questions will be discussed in the next chapter, this chapter concludes on the next page with the exhaustive description of the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents.

Exhaustive Description of the essence of the lived experience of teenagers doing  
*Lectio Divina at home with their parents*

Home based *Lectio Divina* brings a spiritual practice into spaces of everyday life, even automobiles - intimate family spaces that are safe and familiar. *Lectio Divina* is a shared experience between family members who together have a willingness to engage in a spiritual practice at home. *Lectio Divina* in homes fosters a welcomed moment of familial intimacy, especially with parents, and is for youth a source of joy and fun. *Lectio Divina* is lived into by families, which bring the unique character of their household into its practice: some preferring silence, others discussion, some stillness, others activity. *Lectio Divina*, is an externally provided resource and spiritual practice, the structure of which is embedded in tradition, that is easily followed and at times adapted. The interplay between reading scripture, silence, and spoken word integral to *Lectio Divina* provides a context in which youth are comfortable to engage a spiritual practice on their own terms. *Lectio Divina* as experienced by youth is an enrichment of faith and feeling and thinking about God such that they demonstrate a capacity to expressively articulate issues of ethics, theology, and religious experience and begin to see the divine at work in many other aspects of everyday life. *Lectio Divina* in the home provides youth with a dynamic experience of bringing their own spiritual quest to an encounter with the Christian tradition. Youth experience and share thoughts and insights about the divine, scripture and faith that are rare in other lived experience within families.

In the midst of the fullness of life, often experienced as busyness, *Lectio Divina* requires an intentional setting aside of time that provides youth with a time and space in which a meditative and prayerful state can be achieved in the midst of lived experience that is often otherwise. Paradoxically, though busyness and its related stress is at times an inhibitor to its practice, *Lectio Divina* serves as a counter balance and balm to the stress often caused by time constraints, hectic schedules, even conflict. *Lectio Divina* is a positive and unique enough experience that youth express a desire to continue practicing it in their homes, with their family. The constructs of contemporary life, however, are such that the continuation of *Lectio Divina* in the home as engaged by youth and parents, unless well resourced and practiced episodically or seasonally, is perhaps an outcome that is unrealistic.

## CHAPTER 7

### REFLECTION, LEARNING, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND QUESTIONS

*On Monday, September 10, 2001 I arrived at Christ Church Bells Corners. It was the first day of my appointment as Rector. In jeans, runners and a T-Shirt, I unpacked boxes, put books on shelves, and assembled a desk so that the next day – September 11, 2001 – I could arrive at the office ready to work. A few days earlier, my mother reminisced about my father who, now passed, had been a parish priest himself, a Cathedral Dean when he died. “You know Peter John,” my mother said to me, “Your father always gave a great deal of support to the Sunday School.” Mid-way through that first day on the job I was told there would be a meeting of Church School teachers that evening, though there was no need for me to come out on such short notice, especially after a hard day of setting up office. I returned after supper in slacks and a clerical collar to offer greetings to the teachers, my mother’s words ringing in my ears. As I addressed the teachers before slipping away, I thanked them for their ministry and said, “There is no higher priority in the church than the faith nurture of our children.” In the years that followed I have been blessed to minister in a community that had already embodied the vision I voiced. The teenagers who participated in the Lectio Divina project in Lent 2012 would have been in Junior Kindergarten through Grade 2 in September 2001. I remember their little faces and their ways as youngsters. Since then, as others have joined and some have moved on, I have watched them grow, and learn, and serve.*

In Chapter 3, I offered a personal reflection on the Trinity that was rooted in the concept of *perichoresis*, a dance of abundant diversity, *kenosis*, and mysterious, contextual presence. It is a vision of God at work in the intricate web of relationship that is creation. In the same chapter, I explored with the help of Douglas John Hall and Charles Fensham a theology of the cross as being appropriate for a remnant church, a doxological community oriented in self-giving toward the complex world in love, hope, and faith. In Chapter 2, I described and explored my search that culminated in the adoption of hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology used in the qualitative inquiry of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents. In doing so, I cited Van Manen’s caution, “when you listen to a presentation

of a phenomenological nature, you will listen in vain for the punch-line, the latest information, or the big news.”<sup>1</sup> Van Manen would continue,

As in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing. So phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a poetizing project; it tries an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original signing of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, I approach the concluding pages of this thesis with caution and feel compelled to err on the side of brevity. The nature of the *perichoretic* Trinity at the heart of my spirituality, the theology of the cross which guides much of my thinking about the church, and the tradition of hermetic phenomenology that I have embraced in the exploration of the question at the heart of this thesis together compel me to move to conclusion modestly and with humility. On one hand, the exhaustive description at the end of the previous chapter is the conclusion, the culmination of the study, the poem in Van Manen’s metaphor that cannot be summarized.

Yet, on the other hand, clearly, as both a pastor and researcher, there are choices to be made, actions taken, and questions to be asked in light of this thesis project. Within Richard Osmer’s framework of practical theology there is a call to move into the pragmatic task and “consider strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable ...”<sup>3</sup> Or, more simply, given what has been learned, “How

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<sup>1</sup> Van Manen, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Osmer, 4.

might we respond?"<sup>4</sup> After a significant period of formal attending and priestly listening that this thesis represents, as a pastor and interpretive guide it is reasonable to expect such a pragmatic response. Van Manen would of course remind the hermeneutic phenomenologist that the purpose of the approach is one with the "intent to increase one's thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness or tact."<sup>5</sup> One might say, a pragmatic response.

Yet with the cautions of spirituality, theology, and hermeneutic phenomenology outlined above that mark for me a modest approach in conclusion, I have framed this final chapter as being one of reflections, learnings, recommendations, and questions.

### *Pastor, Congregation and Household*

It is remarkable that 10 teenagers and their parents participated as fully as they did in *Lectio Divina* at home during Lent 2012. I suspect they did so because I asked them. They knew it was important to me and the relationships we enjoy are genuine and strong. At the same time, the teenagers and some of their parents had already been exposed to *Lectio Divina* in the congregational setting. It was not entirely new. As well, each household was provided with a parish-developed resource that was easy to follow. Moreover, each home was visited; time was spent between pastor and household members. While questions were asked explicitly

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Van Manen, 4.

geared to the research question, much was communicated, spoken and unspoken, as the pastor entered the nearness of the household. The project of *Lectio Divina* being done by teenagers with their parents was an integrated exercise of pastor, congregation, and household.

I had suspected that not much was happening in households in terms of spiritual practice and Christian formation. Except for grace at meals and some times of informal conversation, in many ways I was correct. I assumed that the result of years of a creative and faithful – even robust – response to the challenge of faith formation at the congregational level was garnering a fragile response in daily life. This thesis project did not support such an assumption. The teenagers who participated exhibited a capacity to pray, meditate, engage the scripture and reflect theologically. They asked questions, had moments of awe, and times of doubt. From the thesis statement outlined in Chapter 1, I can modestly and with humility affirm the teenagers who participated in *Lectio Divina* at home with their parents demonstrated a capacity and willingness to talk about their faith and engage in theological reflection. I can also affirm that the teenagers took comfort in the experience of doing *Lectio Divina* with their parents and expressed enjoyment in doing so. It seemed natural to do so, affirming the sense of nearness and familiarity of a household. Affirming that parents matter most.

I cannot, however, affirm a strong interest for continued spiritual practice that was anticipated in the thesis statement. At best, the interest expressed was for periodic, perhaps seasonal, continuation of spiritual practice in the home. This is not necessarily surprising given the expressed busyness of the households that



participated. These Christian households, clearly committed to their faith, continue to live in a post-Christendom culture, within a church that is a de-facto disestablished, remnant community. Thus, something of a renaissance of faith formation, of spiritual practices, a sanctification of nearness is called for within Christian households. The following are recommendations in light of the reflection and learning outlined above in this section. They are offered specific to Christ Church Bells Corners, though may have wider application and relevance to other congregations.

- Continue to demonstrate an intentional, faithful, creative, and robust commitment to Christian formation at the congregational level. Such a congregation-wide commitment should emphasize:
  - Children and youth being fully integrated within a cross-generational community
  - Multiple and ongoing opportunities for youth involvement in parish life and ministry
  - Opportunities to deepen the entire community as a spiritual body through various spiritual practices
  - Preaching and teaching that leads to conversations rooted in theological reflection about the challenges and opportunities of being a congregation within a post-Christendom, remnant church that is experiencing numeric and demographic decline
  
- Initiate and sustain ministry to introduce faith activities into parish households. Such a ministry should include the following elements:
  - An episodic approach that is centred in the church year beginning with Advent and Lent. In time expand the ministry to include other seasons, feasts, celebrations, and solemnities such as, for example, Easter, Christmas, The Octaves of All Saints and Pentecost. Specific activities and practices could be encouraged in households at times of Baptism, Confirmation, and bereavement.

- As much as possible provide resources that are developed within the parish using activities and practices that are familiar to members in that they are rooted in congregational life (such as *Lectio Divina* at CCBC) or widely known Christian customs (such as Advent wreaths).
- Include practices that slow things down, involving silence, meditation, prayer, conversation and the reading of scripture.
- Encourage each household to find its own rhythm and practice within the activities.
- In order to foster and nurture deep and abiding pastoral relationships, offer as much as possible face-to-face visitation with each household before and after each seasonal household activity. While visitation ought to be a priority carried out by clergy, other trained parishioners engaged in faith formation and pastoral care in the parish could participate.
- Be mindful of the various configurations of families and households taking into account, for example, age of children, singleness, households without children, and multi-generational situations.

### *Methodological Considerations*

Throughout this study I have journeyed with the question of methodology, dedicating an entire chapter to the search that led to adopting hermeneutic phenomenology. Along the way Richard Osmer provided a useful framework to situate my work within practical theology at the same time as encouraging a disciplined approach to priestly listening within the empirical task. Carrie Doehring's trifocal lens helped frame a project that placed a pre-modern spiritual practice using an ancient text into the post-modern contingencies of specific households of a faith community facing challenges described thoroughly by the social science of modernity. The insights and frameworks of both Osmer and

Doehring will resonate with me for many years to come as I approach challenges and opportunities in ministry. The usefulness of frameworks is affirmed.

In adopting hermeneutic phenomenology I discovered a methodology very much aligned with my work as a pastor and priest and my own predilections as a student researcher. As I struggled with the question of methodology, I became grateful for the characteristic of emergent design that allowed me to adjust my project and remain accountable to a legitimate methodology. In the practice and application of hermeneutic phenomenology, I learned that in subsequent research I would be more focused in the data I choose to collect, requiring less adjustment in project design.

I also hold at the conclusion of this thesis that hermeneutic phenomenology is a methodology that would be widely useful within the disciplines of practical and pastoral theology. Discovering the essence of the experience of a phenomenon, through improved understanding by access to its deeper meaning, could provide pragmatic, tactful responses to a number of elements of congregational and pastoral life (for example, receiving communion, being incorporated into a parish, and listening to sermons). Hermeneutic phenomenology fits well within Osmer's continuum of attending and call for priestly listening carried out by an interpretive guide. Clearly it is only one methodology among many, both quantitative and qualitative. If, however, I imagine sitting before a panel of seminary leaders or judicatory officials responsible for the continuing education of clergy I might provide the following recommendations:

- Provide seminarians and clergy with training in hermeneutic phenomenology with a view to its application in congregational and pastoral contexts.

- More generally, provide a thorough orientation into various quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- When developing projects requiring rigorous research design, encourage an early determination and articulation of the methodology being adopted, and resist the temptation to collect inessential data.

### *Questions for the Wider Church*

The temptation in a thesis such as this is to extrapolate, even project, implications for the wider church. In truth, this was a very narrow research project with a precise question in a very particular context using one method of qualitative inquiry. The context is not unique though. Canadian mainline churches face some very challenging demographics. The Anglican Church of Canada, for example, has a tiny cohort of teenagers. I suspect that many, many Anglican Christian households in Canada struggle with busyness and seldom, if ever, engage in faith activities in the home. The project thesis tells the story of a specific congregation in which teenagers participated in *Lectio Divina* with their parents. The fruits of that story now become part of the over-all conversation about faith formation, the role of parents, households, and congregations for a remnant church. For some it will be of interest. While I cannot project conclusion or make generalization in light of the study I have conducted, I am able to pose the following questions to the wider Church:

- In light of the power of religious memory discussed in Chapter 3, how do we in the current context create lasting religious memory?

- Who are the memory keepers in our church today and how can their ministry and stories be intentionally honoured and passed on from generation to generation?
- What role do various levels of the church (e.g. Dioceses, congregations, national bodies) have to play in supporting and empowering faith formation in households?
- How can faith formation in households take root across the church given issues of regional, household, and theological diversity?
- How can Christians engage in joyful and realistic conversations about being a remnant community that lead to new ways of being church?
- What are the blessings and opportunities of being a remnant church in the post-Christendom epoch?

### *Final Remarks – An Epilogue*

During the time of writing this thesis it was announced that I would be leaving Christ Church Bells Corners to take on a new position as the Director of Mission for the Diocese of Ottawa. My responsibilities will include working with parishes in ministry development, supporting parish clergy, overseeing outreach programs to the marginalized, reconsidering use of church buildings, and sharing in shaping the over-all strategic direction of the Diocese. In many ways, I will be engaging in daily conversations with people, individuals and congregations, who are grappling with the purpose and ministry of a disestablished, remnant church in an epoch of post-Christendom. If my past experience of such conversations serves, little attention will be given to the faith formation of children and youth and the role played by parents, congregations, households, and pastors. As the recommendations and insights of

this thesis abide at Christ Church Bells Corners, I hope that as I move on I will honour the parish by striving to ensure that the essence of the experience of teenagers doing *Lectio Divina* with their parents becomes part of the conversations of my continuing ministry.

In my lifetime the Church has changed. It is far different than the Church in which my father served as a priest. The numbers are reduced and the contexts are shifting. The reality is that it can sometimes be discouraging. Yet, the people who seek to follow Jesus, who gave of himself on the cross, ought to expect times of discouragement to say the least. As the next years unfold, the church will need to transform itself for a relevant ministry in a very new context. Households will need to play a central role, one that has been ignored for too long. The next few years for me are not as interesting as what will come to be for the Church in the next 30 or 50. Long past my days of active ministry, even life this side of glory, I wonder what sort of Church will emerge? Listening, priestly listening, to the teenagers of Christ Church Bells Corners gives me great hope. They, with their tiny cohort across the country, will guide the Church into a new age. My discouragement falls away as I imagine their life long dance with God.

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Initial email sent to parents with attachment requesting participation

*Subject: Request form PJ Hobbs*

*Bcc: [Sent to parents of 13 households, representing 18 teenagers]*

*Sent: January 31, 2012*

*Greetings,*

*Attached is a letter I have written to parents of high school youth at CCBC. The letter is an official invitation to participate in the Thesis Project for my Doctor of Ministry program at the Virginia Theological Seminary. While I hope the letter is mostly self explanatory, I suspect it may raise questions - if so, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me. Alternatively, I look forward to calling you in the next 4-7 days as a follow-up to this email.*

*Thanks you so much for taking the time to read the attached letter and for considering participating in my research.*

*Peace, Peter John*

-----

*Peter John Hobbs  
Christ Church Bells Corners  
3861 Richmond Road  
Nepean, ON  
Ph - 613 829 1826  
Fax 613 829 9287*

Initial Letter of Request to Participate in Thesis Project sent as email attachment to parents

ON PARISH LETTER HEAD

January 31, 2012

Greetings,

As I am sure you are aware, I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Virginia Theological Seminary. I am now at the point in the process when I am engaging in the work of my Thesis Project (TP), which will be the study of the impact of home-based faith activities on the spirituality of youth. During the season of Lent this year I will be inviting households with youth to participate regularly in *Lectio Divina* in their home as a family. The study includes online surveys to be completed by parents and youth before and after participation in the Lenten *Lectio Divina* process. As well, a number of parents and youth will be interviewed before and after Lent. This letter is an invitation to you to participate in my Thesis Project study.

If you agree, you will be given directions as to how to complete the online surveys – including a registration number to be used by each individual. I will be in contact with you in the next week to inquire whether your household intends to participate in this study.

A smaller number of households will be invited to participate in the interview segment of the study which will include both youth and parents. Those interviews will be conducted by myself and will be digitally recorded. You will be asked questions regarding such things as your experience of church, your spirituality, your household relationships, and the things that matter most to you in life. The interviews will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and will be conducted in your home or at CCBC.

The information you share during the interviews will remain confidential. Comments that you make may be anonymously quoted in the final written thesis and in other material that may result from the study. Common themes that emerge from the study may be explored in other elements of my ongoing work as a researcher.

As a priest in this day and age with a passion for working with young people, I struggle with how to be a faithful and effective pastor to the youth entrusted to my care. This Thesis Project is designed to help me and others committed to the Christian formation of youth to be more faithful stewards of our gifts – in ourselves, congregations and households – in order to pass on the Christian faith bequeathed to us to the youth of today in a way that will be with them throughout their lives.

Participation in either the survey or interview element of the study is strictly voluntary but does require the consent of both parent and youth. As well, if you choose to participate, you only have to respond to those questions that you want to answer. I will contact you in a few days to ask if you are willing to participate in this study; if so, we can then set a time and place for the interviews. If you prefer not to participate in the study, that is fine and I am grateful that you gave it your thoughtful consideration. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (pj@xxx.com) or at the parish office (613-829-1826).

Yours in Christ,

Peter John Hobbs  
Rector

Questions for Pre-test Interview with Parents  
VTS – Thesis Project – PJ Hobbs – Winter 2012

Introduction:

Begin by thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate in the discussion. Remind him or her that the matters discussed are confidential and any quotes used in later material will be presented anonymously. Assure them they can pass on any of the questions. Also, remind him or her that participation is voluntary and confirm that that he or she is willing to proceed. Explain briefly the purpose of the interview and outline that the hope is to explore the participant's thoughts, feeling and actions about Church and faith, and current faith activities and conversations in the home.

1. Can you tell me something about church, especially the role it plays in your family life, what activities do you or your children participate in, how do you seek to balance church life with other family activities
  - a. Can you describe one of your most vivid memories of being together with your children at church? What were you doing, who was there, when did it happen, do you ever speak of it at home to this day?
2. I am curious about things you might do at home with your family around faith, prayer, spirituality, and God.
  - a. Are there times when you pray or read the bible together, are there times of the year when do faith activities with your family; what do you do, who is usually with you.
  - b. Can you tell me a story about your family that somehow includes your faith? Can you describe what you did and where you were – at home, at church, on a vacation, out for a walk, or visiting friends? Was it a time of prayer or maybe a funeral or a confirmation or a baptism? Was it a time of happiness or sadness?
3. I am interested in conversations you might have with your children about faith, God, spirituality and the church.
  - a. Do you speak to you about issues surrounding faith? Can you think of conversation you have with them about God or prayer or church. What did you talk about? Who initiated the conversation? Where did it happen? What time of day?
4. I would like to listen to your thoughts and hopes for your children's spirituality. How do you imagine them moving forward in their spiritual journeys? What might that look like as they grow and get older? What do you think can be done now to help influence a good and healthy spiritual life for you children as they grow into adulthood?



Questions for Pre-test Interview with Youth  
VTS – Thesis Project – PJ Hobbs – Winter 2012

Introduction:

Begin by thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate in the discussion.

Remind him or her that the matters discussed are confidential and any quotes used in later material will be presented anonymously. Assure them they can pass on any of the questions. Also, remind him or her that participation is voluntary and confirm that that he or she is willing to proceed. Explain briefly the purpose of the interview and outline that the hope is to explore the participants thoughts, feeling and actions about Church, faith and God, and how these things play a role on family and friends.

1. Can you tell me something about church, the sort of things you do at church, how much time you spend at church, and how long you have been a part of this church?
  - a. Can you describe one of your most vivid memories of being at the church? What were you doing, who was there, how old were you, how did it feel, what were you thinking.
  - b. Do you ever ask yourself questions about what we do at church? If you do, like what?
  
2. I would like to talk about God and your faith or spirituality. How do you connect with God, do you spend much time thinking about God or praying, and are there specific places where you feel especially close to God?
  - a. Can you describe a time when you felt really close to God: where were you, what happened, was anyone else there, what was the feeling, what were you thinking?
  - b. Do you ever wonder about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit? – what sort of questions do you ask?
  
3. I am curious about things you might do at home with your family around faith, prayer, spirituality, and God.
  - a. Are there times when you pray or read the bible together, are there times of the year when do faith activities with your family; what do you do, who is usually with you.
  - b. Can you tell me a story about your family that somehow includes your faith? Can you describe what you did and where you were – at home, at church, on a vacation, out for a walk, or visiting friends? Was it a time of prayer or maybe a funeral or a confirmation or a baptism? What it a time of happiness or sadness?
  
4. I am interested in if and who you speak to about her faith, your thoughts about God.
  - a. Do you speak to your parents about your faith? Can you think of conversation you have with them about God or prayer or church. What did you talk about?
  - b. Do you every talk to your friends about God? Do many of your friends go to church or speak to you about their faith?

Email Sent to Parents following Initial Interview

*Subject: Survey for PJ's Research  
To: XXX and YYY  
Sent: February 20, 2012*

*XXX and YYY [name of Parents],*

*It was great meeting with you and XYX [name of teen] today in order to conduct initial interviews for my research project. I very much appreciate your participation. The next step involves participants (parents and youth) completing an online survey. There is a survey for parents and another for youth, each with its own link (see below). As well, each participant is assigned a registration number that is required to activate the survey. Please complete the survey as soon as possible and before the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, February 22. What follows are the links and registration numbers for your household:*

***Parent Survey*** – *ZXZXZXZZXZZZVVVZZZZVZ [Link]*

*Registration # for XXX, 106-A*

*Registration # for YYY, 106-B*

***Youth Survey*** – *ZXZVVVXXZXZXZXVVCZ [Link]*

*Registration # for XYX, 106-D*

*I have also attached a digital version of the Lectio Divina resource. I will call sometime this week to see if you have any question about the process. Once again, thank you for your participation.*

*Peace, PJ*

-----

*Peter John Hobbs  
Christ Church Bells Corners  
3861 Richmond Road  
Nepean, ON*

## DAILY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE SCALE

“The list that follows includes items you may or may not experience. Please consider how often you directly have this experience and try to disregard whether you feel you should or should not have these experiences. A number of items use the word “God.” If this word is not a comfortable one for you, please substitute another word which calls to mind the divine or holy for you.”

	Many times a day	Every day	Most days	Some days	Once in a while	Never or almost never
I feel God's presence.						
I experience a connection to all of life.						
During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.						
I find strength in my religion or spirituality.						
I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.						
I feel deep inner peace or harmony.						
I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.						
I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.						
I feel God's love for me, directly.						
I feel God's love for me, through others.						
I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.						
I feel thankful for my blessings.						
I feel a selfless caring for others.						
I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.						
I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine.						

	Not at all	Somewhat close	Very close	As close as possible
In general, how close do you feel to God?				

© Lynn G. Underwood: Underwood, L.G. (2006) Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Qualitative Research, Interpretive Guidelines, and Population Distribution for the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale. Archive for the Psychology of Religion 28:1, 181-218.

*Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS)*

(Long Version)

For each item (1-18) below please indicate:

- (1) the FREQUENCY your family is involved in these various activities.
- (2) how IMPORTANT that item is to your family's religious life.

FREQUENCY SCALE:

- 0 = *never or not applicable*
- 1 = *yearly/a few times a year*
- 2 = *monthly/a few times a month*
- 3 = *about weekly*
- 4 = *more than once a week*
- 5 = *about daily*
- 6 = *more than once a day*

IMPORTANCE SCALE:

- 0 = *not important or not applicable*
- 1 = *somewhat important*
- 2 = *important*
- 3 = *very important*
- 4 = *extremely important*

FAMILY FAITH ACTIVITIES	FREQUENCY (0-6)	IMPORTANCE (0-4)
1. Family prayer (family together other than at meals)	___	___
2. Family reading of scripture or other religious texts	___	___
3. Family singing or playing religious music/instruments	___	___
4. Family religious gatherings/activities/celebrations	___	___
5. Family use of religious media (e.g., videos, radio, TV)	___	___
6. Parent giving/speaking religious blessings to child	___	___
7. Religious meals together as a family (e.g., Sabbath, Ramadan)	___	___
8. Family religious conversations at home	___	___
9. Attending religious services/meetings together as a family	___	___
10. Saying/singing a blessing/grace/prayer at family meals	___	___
11. Parents praying with child or listening to her/his prayers	___	___
12. Couple prayer (husband and wife praying together)	___	___
13. Eating/drinking or abstaining from food/drink for religious reasons	___	___
14. Using religious objects in your home (e.g., menorah, cross, icon)	___	___
15. Wearing clothing/jewelry or dressing modestly for religious reasons	___	___
16. Family contributing financial resources for religious reasons	___	___
17. Inviting others into the home for religious purposes (e.g., Bible study, to discuss religious beliefs)	___	___
18. Family members helping/serving others for religious reasons	___	___

*In the Presence of God:  
Slowing Things Down in Households of  
Faith*

*A Resource for Lectio Divina in homes during Lent 2012*

**Christ Church Bells Corners  
Anglican Diocese of Ottawa**

**Compiled by the Venerable Peter John Hobbs  
Rector**

## **Introduction**

In our often busy and active lives, it can be very difficult to set time aside throughout the week to nurture our faith in our homes, with members of our family or even quietly by ourselves. This Lent all households of Christ Church Bells Corners are invited to spend time each week to connect with God in the places we call home.

Folks are encouraged to use *Lectio Divina*, an ancient spiritual exercise practiced by Christians over the centuries to commune with God by means of a slow, thoughtful reading of Scripture that is marked by periods of reflection, contemplation, prayer, and silence. During the last few years, members of our parish have engaged in *Lectio Divina*, including many of the youth of our community.

While all households are encouraged to practice *Lectio Divina* at home this Lent, I will be working closely with those households with youth who are in high school. Through various means, including surveys and interviews, I hope to explore the experience and impact of faith activities in the home on the spirituality of youth. This exploration with the young people and their parents is central to the research I am conducting as part of the thesis project for the completion of my Doctor of Ministry at the Virginia Theological Seminary.

It is my sincere hope and prayer for the people of CCBC that something of God's loving and compassionate grace will be more fully experienced in our homes during this Lenten season. As we go about our daily lives taking time to connect with God either quietly by ourselves or with a few others in our homes it is my hope that we find new meaning and purpose as we gather each Sunday as a community of faith dedicated to nurturing faith and serving the world God loves.

Yours in Christ,

Peter John+

## ***Lectio Divina* – Some Simple Steps and a Bit of Guidance**

Slow intentional reading of the Bible marked by times of silence, prayer, and contemplation marks *Lectio Divina* (translated “sacred reading”). Following a strict format may be helpful for some and less so for others. What is most important is time spent in communion with God by means of a slow reading of Scripture. What follows is a brief outline of the form of *Lectio Divina* that has been used at CCBC over the past few years.

### ***Lectio Divina* – A Simple Guide for Use in a Group**

Select a passage from the Bible, often one of the readings to be read in Church next Sunday. (This resource includes readings to be used each week during Lent 2012)

- Participants sit in silence for approximately one minute
- The passage is read through slowly, twice. Each person is invited to identify a word or a phrase that reaches out – touches – strikes - him/her
  - Silence is kept for two/three minutes as the word or phrase is pondered
  - After the period of silence, each person is invited to voice the word or short phrase from the passage that stood out for him/her, simply saying the word or phrase without explanation.
- Another person reads the passage through once. Folks are asked to discern how Christ is heard and seen in the passage that day.
  - Silence is kept for two/three minutes
  - After the silence, folks are invited, though no one must, to complete the phrase (or one like it) “Today I have seen or heard Christ as ....”
- Another person reads the passage again. Folks are asked to discern what God is calling them to do or become today or this week.
  - Silence is kept for two/three minutes
  - After the silence, folks are invited, though no one must, to complete the phrase (or one like it) “Today God is calling me to ....”
- Folks are invited to pray silently for the person sitting to their left.
- Time permitting; a time of open discussion can commence.
- Conclude by saying together the Lord’s Prayer or the Doxology, or both.

**While the format listed above is very useful, it is good to keep in mind that *Lectio Divina* is a spiritual practice with a very simple pattern:** Read a passage from the Bible.... Be silent ... Read it again ... Be silent ... Read it again ... Be silent ... Say a prayer.

For those wanting to learn more about *Lectio Divina*, attached at the end of this resource is a printout of a website that may prove helpful, or if this is a digital copy go to <<http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html>>. Many other resources exist for those who wish to explore more fully the theory and practice of *Lectio Divina*—a simple “Google Search” will provide ample information.

## ***Lectio Divina* - Each Home Finding its Own Rhythm**

The format outlined in the previous page may be followed in many homes. At the same time, some families may find their own rhythm. For example, the children and youth of our parish are very much accustomed to lengthy periods of silence because of the Activity Days in which they have participated over the years. During these programs there is often an hour or so put aside for something we call DEAP (i.e. drop everything and pray). During DEAP the church is in silence as children, youth, and adults move throughout the building participating in various activities (writing cards, walking the labyrinth, making biblical scenes with Lego, doing beadwork, sitting still). It may be that in some households after a reading of Scripture, slowly that is, some families may move into a time of DEAP when they are silent and thoughtful, though engaging in various activities like doing household chores (e.g. dishes, tidying), drawing a picture, or writing a prayer, poem, a note to a loved one. At certain times families may come back together for a second or third reading of the Scripture passage before continuing in silence and intentionally being in God's presence.

### **How often? What time of day? How long?**

Again, each household will find its own rhythm. That said, folks are encouraged to engage in *Lectio Divina* three times a week. There is no right time of day. Some folks may want to use the early morning, others after the evening meal or before bedtime. Some folks may discover a routine time, while others prefer various times throughout the days and weeks.

While practicing *Lectio Divina* quickly in a hurried manner is clearly counter to its intention, the amount of time dedicated to the practice may well vary from day-to-day. As folks become more accustomed to the practice, there may be longer periods spent in *Lectio Divina*. Some days the pressures of time may mean there is less time available, however, care should be taken to ensure that the practice is met with a thoughtful slowing down.

### **A Word about the Bible**

We believe that the Bible is Sacred Scripture, revealing to us the Word of God. It can bring us comfort, direction, and guidance. It can also challenge us and call us to new ways of being. Sometimes the bible can be confusing and very difficult to understand, an ancient book from a very different place and time. With *Lectio Divina* we give ourselves permission to let the Bible be what it is. Questions will undoubtedly surface. If you like, search for the answers. Seek out conversations. Or simply let the mystery be.

### **The Weeks of Lent and How this Resource Works**

The following pages include readings from the bible that are to be used during the weeks of Lent. Two of the passages are from the readings for the upcoming Sunday at Church. The third reading is taken from the Parables of Jesus. If your household is able to participate in *Lectio Divina* three times a week, you may want to use a different passage on each occasion. On the other hand, you may want to focus on one of the three readings for the duration of the week. Again there are no hard and fast rules—simply a commitment to engage in a prayerful and slow reading of Scripture in our homes marked by periods of silence and reflection. Also, if at any time you have questions about the practice of *Lectio Divina* please do not hesitate to contact me at the parish office—613-829-1826.



**Passages to be used from Ash Wednesday, February 22 until Saturday, February 25**

**Two of the Readings for the 1st Sunday of Lent**

**Genesis 9:8-17** Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.\* I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

**Mark 1:9-15** In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved;\* with you I am well pleased.' And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news\* of God,\* and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;\* repent, and believe in the good news.'\*

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**A Parable of Jesus**

**Matthew 13:31-32** He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

**Remember** – You are asked to do Lectio Divina three times a week. You can; however, use the same passage each time or a different one on each occasion. It is up to you.

**Remember:** Listen for the word or phrase that stands out for you.

**Passages to be used from the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent, February 26 until Saturday, March 3**

**Two of the Readings for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

**Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty;\* walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram,\* but your name shall be Abraham,\* for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring\* after you. God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

**Mark 8:31-38** Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,\* will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words\* in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

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**A Parable of Jesus**

**Luke 18:9-14** Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'

**Remember the pattern:** Read a passage from the Bible ... Be silent ... Read it again ... Be silent ... Read it again ... Be silent ... Say a prayer.

## Passages to be used from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent, March 4 until Saturday, March 10

### Two of the Readings for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent

**Exodus 20:1-17** Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before\* me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation\* of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder.\* You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

**John 2:13-22** The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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### A Parable of Jesus

**Mark 4:26-29** He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

**Remember:** Be together in silence, in God's presence. Turn all the gadgets off.

## Passages to be used from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent, March 11th until Saturday March 17

### Two of the Readings from the 4th Sunday of Lent

**Psalm 107** O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; or his steadfast love endures for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.\* Some were sick\* through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress; he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

**John 3:14-21** And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.\* 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'\*

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### A Parable of Jesus

**Luke 10:25-37** Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.\* 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.' But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii,\* gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

**Remember:** Ask yourself, "How do I see or hear God today?"

## Passages to be used from the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, March 18<sup>th</sup> until Saturday, March 24

### Two of the Readings for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

**John 12:20-33** Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

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### A Parable of Jesus

**Luke 14:15-24** One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, 'Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!' Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now." But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come." So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room." Then the master said to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner."'

**Remember:** Ask yourself, "What is God calling me to do?"

**Passages to be used from the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, March 25<sup>th</sup> until Saturday, March 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Two of the Readings for Palm Sunday**

**Philippians 2:5-11** Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Mark 11:1-11** When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage & Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples & said to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.”’ They went away & found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’ Then he entered Jerusalem & went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

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**A Parable of Jesus Matthew 20:1-16** ‘For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.” So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, “Why are you standing here idle all day?” They said to him, “Because no one has hired us.” He said to them, “You also go into the vineyard.” When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, “Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.” When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.” But he replied to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?” So the last will be first, and the first will be last.’

## **Passages to be used from Palm Sunday, April 1 until Holy Saturday, April 7**

### **Three Readings to used during Holy Week**

#### **A Reading Mindful of Maundy Thursday**

**John 13:1-20** Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.' After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, "The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.'

#### **A Reading Mindful of Good Friday**

**Luke 23:26-49** As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?' Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[ Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.']] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!'

The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.' One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.' It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.' And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

### **A Readings Mindful of Easter Sunday**

**John 20:1-18** Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.



Email sent to youth (copied to parents) requesting a written description of *Lectio Divina*

*Subject: Writing Description of Lectio Divina*  
*To: XYX [Teenager]*  
*CC: XXX and XYX [Parents]*  
*Date: March 12, 2012*

*Hey XYX,*

*We are now half way through Lent and I am very curious about how your experience fo Lectio Divina has been going. In our home we have struggled to find time and even done Lectio Divina in the car on the way to school. In a few weeks, I will be calling to set up some more interviews. In the meantime, I would like to invite you to write a brief description of a time when you participated in Lectio Divina this Lent. I do want to emphasize that this is voluntary and over and above what you have already agreed to do as a participant in my research project. If you would like to write a description, I ask that you follow these instructions:*

*Describe just one of your experiences of Lectio Divina (rather than your experience of Lectio Divina in general). Simply describe your experience. Some of the following questions may help in describing your experience:*

*The Setting - Where were you? The Time of Day?*

*Who was with you? Parents? Sibling? Others?*

*What did you and others do?*

*Sit or move around?*

*Keep Silent?*

*Who read?*

*What passage from the bible did you read?*

*Was there a word or phrase that you focused on?*

*How did you think or feel about God?*

*Did you feel called to do something or behave in a certain way?*

*What were you feeling?*

*What were you thinking?*

*Keep it relatively short – one paragraph is fine, no more than a page. If you choose to write a description, you can give it to me by hand at church or you can email it to me at [PJ@zzz.com](mailto:PJ@zzz.com). Thanks so much for taking the time to read this email.*

*Peace, PJ*

-----  
*Peter John Hobbs*  
*Christ Church Bells Corners*  
*3861 Richmond Road*  
*Nepean, ON*

Email sent to parents requesting post-test participation

*Subject: Next Steps: PJ's Research Project  
TO: XXX and YYY [Parents]  
Date: April 6, 2012*

*I am writing regarding your research project that your household has been participating in during the season of Lent, which of course is quickly coming to an end. There are two more steps that are part of my project in which I hope you will be willing to participate. The first involves the completing of an online survey – an exact repeat of the one completed a number of weeks ago as the research project began. Again, there is a separate survey for parents and youth, each with its own link (so below). As well, each participant is assigned a registration number that is required to activate the survey. Please complete the survey as soon as possible and before Monday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. What follows are the links and registration numbers for your household:*

*Parent Survey: ZZXZVXVZZXZZVXZXZZ [Link]*

*Registration # for XXX, 106-A*

*Registration # for YYY, 106-B*

*Youth Survey: ZZXZXXXZZZVXZXVVXZ [Link]*

*Registration # for XYX, 106-D*

*Second, I will be calling in the next few days in order to make arrangements to re-interview both of you and XYX. The interview will follow a similar format to that of the one conducted at the beginning of my research project, though this time will likely require a little less time. I am so grateful for your participation. It really has made a difference and I look forward to being able to conduct the interviews.*

*Peace, PJ*

-----

*Peter John Hobbs  
Christ Church Bells Corners  
3861 Richmond Road  
Nepean, ON*

Questions for Post-test Interview with Youth  
VTS – Thesis Project – PJ Hobbs – Winter 2012

Introduction:

Begin by thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate in the discussion. Remind him or her that the matters discussed are confidential and any quotes used in later material will be presented anonymously. Assure them they can pass on any of the questions. Also, remind him or her that participation is voluntary and confirm that that he or she is willing to proceed. Explain briefly the purpose of the interview and outline that the hope is to explore the participants' thoughts and experience of doing *Lectio Divina*.

1. So, tell me, how did *Lectio Divina* work in your home?
  - a. Who participated? Where did you do it – in the same place, at the same time? Or, did those things change? How long did it take? How many times a week – on average - did you do *Lectio Divina*?
  - b. What didn't work so well? (What were the obstacles?)
  - c. What made it easy?
  - d. (If appropriate/needed): Did you follow the description I gave you or did you come up with your own ways and ideas – if so, what were they?
  - e. How did your experience (feelings) change the more you did it?
  
2. Thanks for that overview. In Lent I send you an email asking you to describe your experience with *Lectio Divina*. Now that Lent is over, I would really like it if you could describe another particular time you did *Lectio Divina*.
  - a. What was going on?
  - b. What were you feeling?
  
3. Now that you have experienced *Lectio Divina*, how do you feel about doing this sort of thing in the future at home with your family?
  - a. Or with your friends?
  
4. How has your experience of *Lectio Divina* influenced how you think, feel, and act about God?
  - a. About your family?
  - b. About church?
  
5. Did the process of *Lectio Divina* raise any questions for you about your faith?
  - a. About God?
  
6. Having done *Lectio Divina*, are there other spiritual experiences you would like to pursue?
  - a. If so, I'd love to hear about them. What other spiritual experiences you are hoping to have?

Many, many thanks! I couldn't have done my doctoral research without the support and participation of people like you.

Questions for Post-test Interview with Parents  
VTS – Thesis Project – PJ Hobbs – Winter 2012

Introduction:

Begin by thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate in the discussion. Remind him or her that the matters discussed are confidential and any quotes used in later material will be presented anonymously. Assure them they can pass on any of the questions. Also, remind him or her that participation is voluntary and confirm that that he or she is willing to proceed. Explain briefly the purpose of the interview and outline that the hope is to explore the participants' thoughts and experience *Lectio Divina*.

1. So, tell me how did *Lectio Divina* work in your home?
  - a. Who participated? Where did you do it – in the same place, at the same time? Or, did those things change? How long did it take? How many times a week – on average - did you do *Lectio Divina*?
  - b. What didn't work so well? (What were the obstacles?)
  - c. What made it easy?
  - d. (If appropriate/needed) Did you follow the description I gave you, or did you come up with your own ways and ideas – if so, what were they?
  - e. What did it feel like to participate in *Lectio Divina*?
  - f. How did your experience (feelings) change the more you did it?
2. Thanks for that overview. I was hoping you could describe for me a particular time you did *Lectio Diivina* during Lent. Describe the situation and everything that was going on ...
3. What impact did *Lectio Divina* have on your relationship with your children?
  - a. How do you think it influenced their faith and spirituality?
4. Having done *Lectio Divina*, can you imagine continuing to do it as a family – regularly or at different times in the year?
  - a. What might help you get it started/keep it going? (Would it help for the church to provide resources?)
5. Are there other spiritual experiences you would like to pursue with your family?

Again, thank you so much for supporting my doctoral research by participating in this project. Your willingness and honesty have been a blessing.

## Online Survey

The Survey was conducted online using the Survey Monkey tool. The survey incorporated two existing surveys – the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) and the Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS), with the addition of Talking about Faith (TAF), which is unique to this survey. The survey was conducted just prior to Lent 2012.

- 8 families from Christ Church Bells Corners participated in the survey, with at least 1 adult and 1 youth in each family. A total of 22 people (12 adults and 10 youth) filled in the survey.
- The survey was confidential – family members were assigned registration numbers which were administered by a separate person than the one analyzing the results. The registration numbers did identify family relationships. (e.g. Adult 101-A, Youth 101-D would be in the same family group.)
- Two versions of the survey were distributed – the Adult version contained all of the questions, the Youth version did not contain the Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS) series of questions.
- Some participants did not answer all questions – average results were adjusted to reflect these non-responses.

Daily Spiritual Experience Scale \*

The main part of the survey comprises a series of statements, which are measured on a six-point scale ranging from Never or Almost Never (0) to Many Times a Day (5).

Never or almost Never	0
Once in a While	1
Some Days	2
Most Days	3
Every Day	4
Many Times a Day	5

The results of the survey were averaged for each group - Adults and Youth for each question in the survey.

<b>Rankings</b>	<b>Adult Average</b>	<b>Youth Average</b>	<b>Difference</b>
I feel God's presence.	3.33	2.80	0.53
I experience a connection to all of life.	3.58	3.00	0.58
During worship or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.	2.42	2.50	-0.08
I find strength in my religion or spirituality.	3.25	3.10	0.15
I feel deep inner peace or harmony.	2.75	2.80	-0.05
I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.	2.50	2.67	-0.17
I feel God's love for me, directly.	2.83	3.20	-0.37
I feel God's love for me, through others.	2.92	3.00	-0.08
I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.	3.58	3.10	0.48
I feel thankful for my blessings.	3.83	4.20	-0.37
I feel a selfless caring for others.	3.17	3.56	-0.39
I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.	2.55	3.40	-0.85
I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine.	2.67	3.50	-0.83
<b>OVERALL AVERAGE</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>-0.11</b>

An additional question, “In general, how close do you feel to God?” is rated on a four-point scale ranging from Not at All (0) to As Close as Possible (3).

Not at All	0
Somewhat Close	1
Very Close	2
As Close as Possible	3

	<b>Adult Responses</b>	<b>Youth Responses</b>	<b>Difference</b>
In general, how close do you feel to God?	1.4	1.6	-0.2

\* © Lynn G. Underwood: Underwood, LG, Ordinary Spiritual Experience: Qualitative Research, Interpretive Guidelines, and Population Distribution for the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale, Archive for the Psychology of Religion/ Archiv für Religionspsychologie, Volume 28, Number 1, 2006, pp. 181-218. [www.dsescal.org](http://www.dsescal.org)

### Talking About Faith

Two statements were designed specifically for this survey by Peter John Hobbs. They are measured on a six-point scale ranging from Never or Almost Never (0) to Many Times a Day (5).

Never or almost Never	0
Once in a While	1
Some Days	2
Most Days	3
Every Day	4
Many Times a Day	5

The results of the survey were averaged for each group - Adults and Youth for each question in the survey.

	<b>Adult Responses</b>	<b>Youth Responses</b>	<b>Difference</b>
I speak to my family about my faith	2.67	3.10	-0.43
I speak to my friends about my faith	1.00	1.10	-0.10



Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS) \*\*

The FAITHS survey focuses on the experience of faith within a family setting, with thirteen topics addressed. The FAITHS survey was only completed by Adults.

Frequency is measured on a seven-point scale, ranging from Never or Not Applicable (0) to More than Once a Day (6).

	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
Never or Not Applicable	0
Yearly / A few times a year	1
Monthly / A few times a month	2
About Weekly	3
More than once a week	4
About Daily	5
More than once a day	6

Importance is measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from Not Important or Not Applicable (0) to Extremely Important (4).

	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
Not Important or Not Applicable	0
Somewhat Important	1
Important	2
Very Important	3
Extremely Important	4

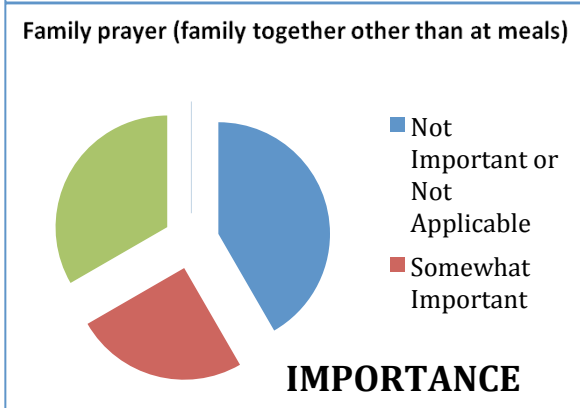
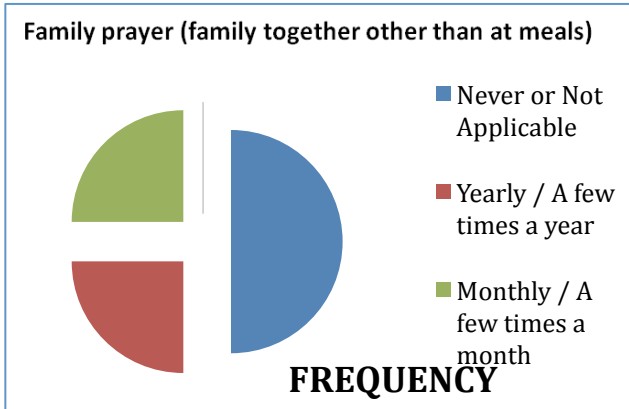
\*\* © David C. Dollahite, and Nathaniel M. Lambert. Faith Activities in the Home Scale (FAITHS). Used with Permission

The results of the survey were averaged for each question in the survey for Frequency and Importance. Note that each value uses a different scale.

<b>FAITHS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY (Scale of 6)</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE (Scale of 4)</b>
Family prayer (family together other than at meals)	0.75	0.92
Family reading of scripture or other religious texts	0.58	0.75
Family singing or playing religious music / instruments	1.00	0.83
Family religious gatherings / activities / celebrations	1.83	2.25
Family use of religious media (e.g., videos, radio, TV)	0.17	0.08
Parent giving / speaking religious blessings to child	0.92	1.00
Religious meals together (e.g., Sabbath, Ramadan)	1.42	2.08
Family religious conversations at home	1.92	1.83
Attending religious services / meetings together as a family	2.67	2.50
Saying/singing a blessing/grace/prayer at family meals	2.83	2.08
Parents praying with child or listening to her /his prayers	0.50	0.83
Couple prayer (husband and wife praying together)	0.25	0.58
Eating /drinking or abstaining from food /drink for religious reasons	0.42	0.42
Using religious objects in your home (e.g., menorah, cross, icon)	1.25	0.58
Wearing clothing /jewelry or dressing modestly for religious reasons	1.40	0.70
Family contributing financial resources for religious reasons	2.75	2.75
Inviting others into the home for religious purposes (e.g., Bible study, to discuss religious beliefs)	0.00	0.08
Family members helping /serving others for religious reasons	2.00	2.17
<b>OVERALL AVERAGE</b>	1.26	1.25

Further detail is provided below for FAITHS questions related to Family Prayer and Scripture Readings.

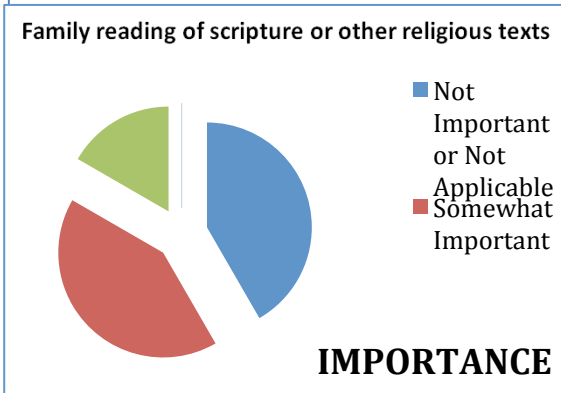
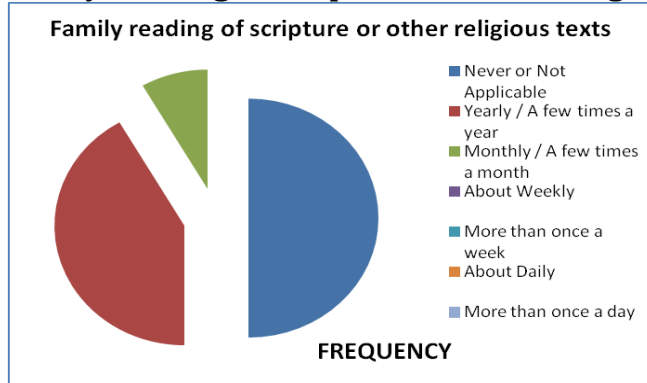
**Family Prayer (family together other than at meals)**



Family prayer	Never or N/A (0)	Yearly / few a year (1)	Monthly / few a month (2)	About Weekly (3)	> 1/week (4)	About Daily (5)	> 1/day (6)
Frequency	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%

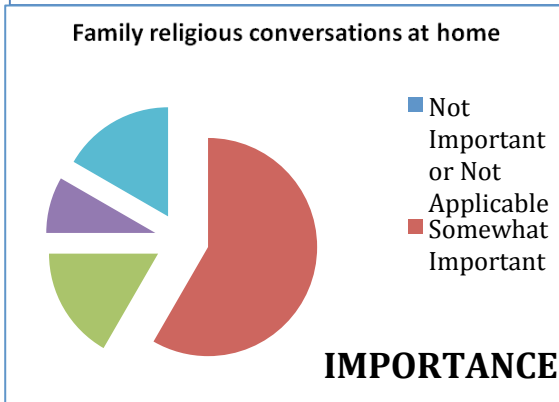
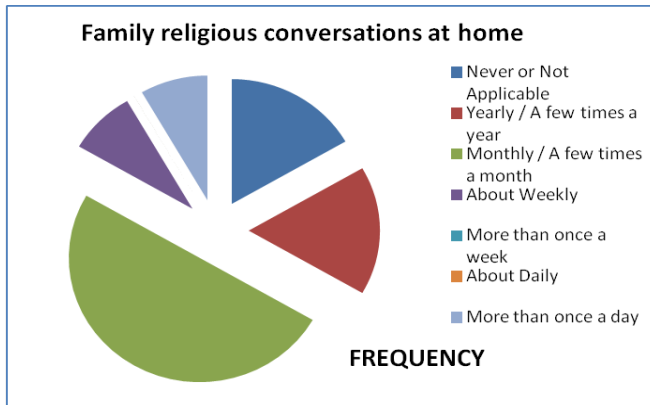
Family prayer	Not Important or N/A (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	Important (2)	Very Important (3)	Extremely Important (4)
Importance	42%	25%	33%	0%	0%

## Family Reading of Scripture or Other Religious Texts



Family reading of scripture	Never or N/A (0)	Yearly / few a year (1)	Monthly / few a month (2)	About Weekly (3)	> 1/ week (4)	About Daily (5)	> 1/ day (6)	Family reading of scripture	Not Important or N/A (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	Important (2)	Very Important (3)	Extremely Important (4)
Frequency	50%	42%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	Importance	42%	42%	17%	0%	0%

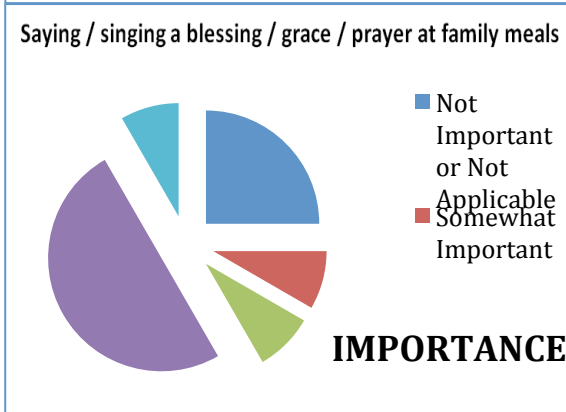
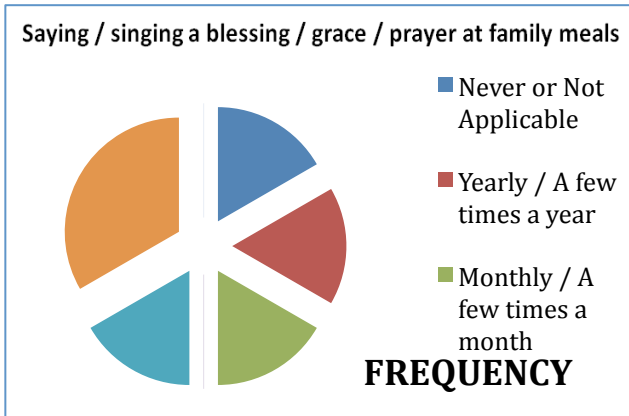
## Family Religious Conversations at Home



Family religious conversations	Never or N/A (0)	Yearly /few a year (1)	Monthly /few a month (2)	About Weekly (3)	>1/week (4)	About Daily (5)	>1/day (6)
Frequency	17%	17%	50%	8%	0%	0%	8%

Family religious conversations	Not Important or N/A (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Extremely Important (3)	Extremely Important (4)
Importance	0%	58%	17%	8%	17%

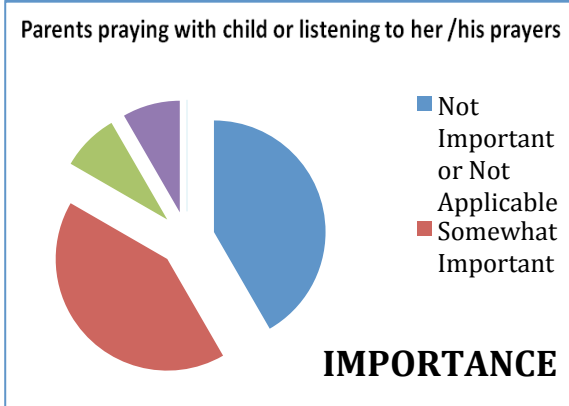
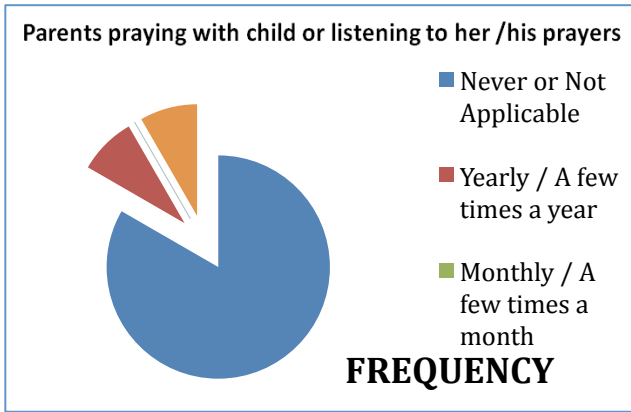
## Saying / Singing a blessing / Grace/ Prayer at Family Meals



Saying grace	Never or N/A (0)	Yearly /few a year (1)	Monthly /few a month (2)	About Weekly (3)	>1/ week (4)	About Daily (5)	> 1/ day (6)
Freq- uency	17%	17%	17%	0%	17%	33%	0%

Saying grace	Not Important or N/A (0)	Some what Important (1)	Impor- tant (2)	Very Important (3)	Extremely Important (4)
Impor- tance	25%	8%	8%	50%	8%

## Parents Praying with Child or Listening to her/his Prayers



Parents praying with child	Never or N/A (0)	Yearly / few a year (1)	Monthly / few a month (2)	About Weekly (3)	>1/week (4)	About Daily (5)	>1/day (6)	Parents praying with child	Not Important or N/A (0)	Somewhat Important (1)	Important (2)	Very Important (3)	Extremely Important (4)
Frequency	83%	8%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	Importance	42%	42%	8%	8%	0%

Written Descriptions of Lectio Divina from Youth

Received by email, March 18, 2012 (Harmony)

The second Lectio Devina that my mom and I had done together, we were in the car on the way to my piano lessons. We had just finished dinner, and it was after a stressful, busy day. My mom was driving, so I read the scripture (John 2:13-22). I read the scripture through, we had a couple minutes of silence, then I read through it again. After, we discussed our feelings and words or phrases that we found stood out in our minds. One phrase that we both agree stood out from the rest was "Stop making my Father's house a market-place!". We both agreed that in our society, many people push God aside or "forget God" for what they believe is "more important" (such as making money). In this scripture, the Jews are forgetting that the temple is a holy place, and using it as a place to make money. I felt as if I was being called to remember that God is above all other things in my life, and that I have to remember not to let other things take the place of God.

Received by email, March 19, 2012 (Esther)

Hey its Esther,

1. The setting was at the dinner table when we are all together. Usually after supper.
2. The people that are there was pretty much My mom and Dad and I
3. We would either just be doing the dishes and reading it or sitting at the table and just sitting to read it.
4. We did both, my dad would do the dishes while my mom and I would sit at the table eating our dessert.
5. After we would read it we kept silent for 1 minute and then read it again.
6. We all take turns reading, 1st I would read then my mom would read and the 3rd time my dad would read it.
7. Jeremiah 31:31-34
8. Alot of the time all three of us felt the word forgiveness ment a lot.
9. I felt like God will always forgive us even if we do something really bad.
10. No I didnt really feel like I was being called to do something in a curtain way.
11. I was feeling that even through tough times and we do something wrong and feel guilty, God always new the right move.
12. I forget what I was thinking to tell you the truth.

Well thats all the questions, Hope you got everything you needed!  
See you at church.



Received by email, March 21, 2012 (Mariam)

PJ, I have no problem writing a paragraph, hope this is good enough for you.

Doing the Lectio Divina is my mom and me, we usually do it in the living room on our couch when it's just the two of us around in that area. We end up doing the reading after dinner when we both seem not to be doing something for once. My mom reads the paragraph first, we take a little bit of time of silence and then we go do something quietly, while thinking of the reading and what it means for about 10 minutes. I read the passage again and we do the same thing once more. My mom reads the passage for the third time, we be silient for a minute and then talk about what we thought the reading was about and what personally stood out to us. During this whole time I feel calm and relaxed and more focused on the words that I'm reading and are being read to me. Hope this helps, Mariam

Received by email, March 25, 2012 (Michael)

Hey P.J.

We usually do Lectio Divina in my moms room, at around 10 at night. I sit quietly as mom reads the passage about the ten commandments. Although I don't have a phrase that comes to mind, I wonder why God would choose the commandments he did, although I do not disagree with them. I believe I was called to follow them as they are what god deems "Good" and "proper". I don't know that I usualy feel much different after Lectio Divina, however I do consider what whichever person meant or why they would ask that. I hope this is what you were looking for.

Received by email, March 26, 2012 (Judith)

hey pj, sorry it took me so long to respond, but here is my paragraph:  
One experience I had of Lectio Divina was in my family room one sunday afternoon. My parents were both there and we all sat (or laid) on the couches while we read and contemplated the passages. We each took turns reading the passage, then keeping silent and thinking about it. The passage that we read was about the good samaritan and i felt God was calling me to be like the samaritan; kind and generous no matter who is in need. After we read through the passage we would pause for a couple minutes and consider the passage, thinking about what stood out to us. We discussed briefly what word stood out to us from the passage, and the part that stood out to me was when jesus told the lawyer to "go and do likewise" (referring to the good Samaritan), and i felt like that was what God was telling me with that passage. After we finished keeping our silence, we went on with our days, relaxed and renewed. If you want me to make it longer or change it, just let me know :)  
Received by email, April 1, 2012 (Paul)

Paul listed questions provided with his response following (italics added to Paul's responses)

- The setting – where were ? The Time of Day? *We were in the kitchen at the dinner table, it was usually after dinner at around 7pm.*
- Who was with you? Parents, siblings, others? *It was me, James, and our mom and dad.*
- What did you and others do? *Followed the instructions in the package, and sat at the dinner table.*
- Sit or move around? *Sit, did dishes at the beginning.*
- Keep silent? *Talked a bit when it was supposed to be silent.*
- Who read? *Mom and Dad.*
- What passage from the bible did you read? *John 13:20.*
- Was there a word or phrase that you focused on? *Wash, bread, betray.*
- How did you think or feel about God? *Felt closer.*
- Did you feel called to do something or behave in a certain way? *To be silent when others were talking, listen.*

Received by email, April 2, 2012 (Margaret)

#### Lectio Divina Descriptive Piece

Late in the evening, my father, mother, sister and I gather together in a quiet room in the house. We spread out on the living room couch and settle in our usually places. I sit curled in a corner, a blanket wrapped around me. Mom sits to my right, then Martha, and completing the relaxed circle, Dad sits across from me beside Martha. We all take turns reading from different versions of the Bible while the others sit quietly, listening. Generally, Mom reads the most often and I the least, as I prefer to sit very still and listen. After each reading, we pause silently for a moment before discussing our thoughts and impressions: the word or phrase that stood out; how we see God; and what God is calling us to do. It is very rare that someone has nothing to say, but on one occasion I remained silent after a reading.

I love hearing what everyone has to say. It is not necessarily the same things I mention, but I feel they are all equally true and illuminating. I feel that I benefited from the insight of my mother, father and sister, just as much from my own personal meditations. What I found most exciting was the similarities of our opinions. Especially Dad and I; we often said the exact same things in our discussion.

At the end of each Lectio Divina session, I feel calm and relaxed. Feeling fortified and closer to both God and my family I am ready for the oncoming week.

Received by email, April 4, 2012 (Martha)

It was around 7:30 when Margaret, dad and I drifted into the living room to do *Lectio Divina*. Mom would have been there, but she was out of town. The first time we did *Lectio Divina*, we each chose our seats and we have always gone to those places on the couch. But not this time. I went to Margaret's seat, dad went to mine, and Margaret's to dad's. Maybe it was the fact that mom wasn't there that disturbed the status-quo, but I suppose it doesn't really matter. We were reading the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. That was the parable that dad always used to teach us lessons when we misbehaved as kids, so it was especially exciting. I read first from the New International Bible. The phrase that stuck out to me was "Or are you envious because I am generous?" I felt that God wanted me to be the person that didn't get as much pay, but take it glad that I got what I needed. At the end, I was thinking of all the things that I could do to be that person. We had a discussion about the difference between life being fair and being just. We decided that as long as you have what you *need*, it doesn't matter what anyone else has. And God is definitely just.

Received by email, April 9, 2012 (James)

When my family and I were doing *Lectio Divina* it was about 7 pm after dinner and we were at home. All five of us were there, my brother, sister, parents, and me. We all sat when we were doing it but it was our first time doing *Lectio Divina* so it wasn't as silent as it was supposed to be. My Dad started reading the reading 9: 8-17 from Genesis first then I read and then my Mom. When we were reading the passage I mostly focused on the word Bow. I think I felt close to God during this because I was closer to my family and I felt more connected with them. I felt like I had to behave like a better person afterwards because I felt I could be a better person. I was thinking to myself that this was a good experience for our family because we all shared thoughts and parts of our days and after I felt like I had a better understanding of the family members, which made me feel happy.

Received by Email, April 18 (Elizabeth)

One day, me and my sister were driving home from work. We were rushing home because that night we were gonna do *Lectio Divina* and have a nice family dinner with all of us home ( which does not happen as much as it should , which I am at fault for on that one and I feel bad about it) . Anyways on our way home I received a text message from my father saying " Get home soon , can't wait for the whole family to be home it will be nice" or something along those lines. So I was happy that I would be home with the family and have a good time because I knew it meant a lot to my family and I wanted to show them I still loved them and I was sorry for not being the best daughter or sister because i haven't been home a lot. I knew a dinner wouldn't make it better but it was a start and also we were going to do *Lectio Divina*

which meant a lot to my father. So ANYWAYS on our way home me and my older sister got in to a argument about work and her coming home. That fight was bound to happen a time or another , but that night was the worst of nights for it to happen, now the fight was bad and there was name calling and rude things said. It ended with my sister and tears and me just really mad and upset ( if you knew me , you would know I am not one to cry) . So I walk in the house and tell my parents the events that just happen, then I told them I was sorry that it happened tonight out of all nights. They then dealt with my sister who was balling her eyes out .....! Then they came upstairs and despite what just happened we sat there and did *Lectio Divina* with the whole family. It was interesting , right then at that moment we had a lot to pray for and a lot to think about. Well we were sitting there and my father would asked " how to do you see god today" " what did god help you with" or whatever the questions we asked , for the first time I wanted to answer and I was looking for the strength that God could give me that day and I wasn't just making up anwser that would make my day better I was honestly thinking about the questions and where I needed to see him today to make it through the night. It was the best *Lectio Divina* I ever had. After one of the worst nights this year my family I think truly needed that , a time to be calm and just sit there and pray and I honestly thought we should do that more often because it helped everyone calm down and it was just a good place to then connected with God and believe that he would help my family get through this time in our life.

By : Elizabeth

Table:  
Significant Statements/Meaning Units/  
Textural Descriptions/Interpretive Descriptions

Participant	Significant Statement Organized into Meaning Units MEANING UNIT: SETTING/SPATIALITY	Textual Description: “What Happened” SETTING/SPACE SPATIALITY	Interpretive Description: “Experienced Interpreted” SETTING/SPACE SPATIALITY
Harmony	1. The second <i>Lectio Divina</i> that my mom and I had done together, we were in the car on the way to my piano lessons	a) Settings for <i>Lectio Divina</i> varied according to each family: the dinner table, family and living rooms, bedrooms and cars.	a) <i>Lectio Divina</i> was experienced in intimate family spaces that were safe and familiar.
Esther	2. The setting was at the dinner table when we are all together. Usually after supper. We would either just be doing the dishes and reading it or sitting at the table and just sitting to read it.	b) For some it was a family event with both parents and all children of the household. For others it was one parent and the participating youth.	b) Home based <i>Lectio Divina</i> brought a spiritual practice into familial spaces of everyday lived experience, even automobiles.
Miriam	3. Doing the <i>Lectio Divina</i> is my mom and me, we usually do it in the living room on our couch when it's just the two of us around in that area.	c) With rare exceptions, <i>Lectio Divina</i> took place in the evening.	c) <i>Lectio Divina</i> was a shared experience between family members who together had a willingness to engage in a spiritual practice at home.
Michael	4. We usually do <i>Lectio Divina</i> in my mom's room, at around 10 at night. I sit quietly as mom reads the passage about the Ten Commandments.		
	5. We'd usually do it around 10-11 or so at night, no particular day of the week. Um we would go to my Mom's room and we would lie down		
Judith	6. One experience I had of <i>Lectio Divina</i> was in my family room one Sunday afternoon. My parents were both there and we all sat (or laid) on the couches while we read and contemplated the passages.		
Margaret	7. Late in the evening, my father, mother, sister and I gather together in a quiet room in the house. We spread out on the living room couch and settle in our		

James	<p>usually places. I sit curled in a corner, a blanket wrapped around me. Mom sits to my right, then Martha, and completing the relaxed circle.</p> <p>8. When my family and I were doing <i>Lectio Divina</i> it was about 7 pm after dinner and we were at home.</p> <p>9. ... we were in the kitchen at the dinner table, it was usually after dinner ...</p> <p>10. ... if we participated as a family we would do it in our living room, and it would usually be all of us, so me, my dad (you), my mom, my sisters.</p> <p>11. ... when we did it at home it was more in deep thought</p> <p>12. ... on certain days me and my dad, you, would do it in the car on the way to co-op placement.</p> <p>13. when it was in the car it was more like read it and less deep thoughts</p>	
Paul		
Elizabeth		
Participant	<p>MEANING UNIT: CONNECTING WITH FAMILY/REALATIONAL</p>	CONNECTING WITH FAMILY/RELATIONAL
Harmony	<p>14. After, we discussed our feelings and words or phrases that we found stood out in our minds. One phrase that we both agree stood out from the rest was "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!". We both agreed that in our society, many people push God aside or "forget God" for what they believe is "more important" (such as making money).</p> <p>15. It was easy to find things to talk about</p>	<p>a) Youth expressed feeling a closeness and connection with their families during <i>Lectio Divina</i>.</p> <p>a) <i>Lectio Divina</i> in homes fostered a welcomed experience of familial intimacy, especially with parents.</p>

<p>Esther</p>	<p>with most of the Bible readings that we did.</p> <p>16. Um, it was different because I'm not used to like talking with my Mom about religious things and stuff.</p> <p>17. A lot of the time all three of us felt the word forgiveness meant a lot.</p> <p>18. I enjoyed the time with my family talking about God.</p> <p>19. Yeah, well we would say what we were feeling or like that word or phrase and then we would talk about that word or that phrase and everything so yeah.</p> <p>20. I felt like I was close to my family and everything because I was with them. Even my sister participated in one.</p> <p>21. So like, the time that we spend together doing that makes me feel good because I know we're still all a family and everything.</p>	<p>b) Youth easily spoke about scripture and God with their parents.</p> <p>c) Youth appreciated hearing the insights and viewpoints of others in their family.</p> <p>d) Youth acknowledged that although easy and enjoyable, speaking with their parents and other family members about scripture and God was something rare.</p>	<p>b) As a spiritual practice in the home, <i>Lectio Divina</i> provided a context for youth to experience and share thoughts and insights about the divine, scripture and faith that is rare in other lived experience within families.</p>
<p>Miriam</p>	<p>22. ... then [we] talk about what we thought the reading was about and what personally stood out to us.</p> <p>23. ... when we were done the reading we'd just talk about what we thought the reading meant and then if like anything stuck out kind of to one of us.</p>		
<p>Judith</p>	<p>24. It was good we kind of – it was a time other than dinner time when we would all come together because other than that we're all doing different things in different rooms.</p> <p>25. We discussed briefly what word stood out</p>		



	<p>to us from the passage.</p> <p>26. It was different because I don't really talk to (my parents) that much about [my faith].</p> <p>27. I love hearing what everyone has to say. It is not necessarily the same things I mention, but I feel they are all equally true and illuminating. I feel that I benefited from the insight of my mother, father and sister, just as much from my own personal meditations. What I found most exciting was the similarities of our opinions. Especially Dad and I; we often said the exact same things in our discussion.</p> <p>28. I feel ... closer to ... my family</p> <p>29. We had a discussion about the difference between life being fair and being just. We decided that as long as you have what you <i>need</i>, it doesn't matter what anyone else has.</p> <p>30. I don't know, um. We just did it, it wasn't like it was a difficult thing to do or an easy thing to do it was just reading the Bible and meditating.</p> <p>31. I was thinking to myself that this was a good experience for our family because we all shared thoughts and parts of our days and after I felt like I had a better understanding of the family members, which made me feel happy.</p> <p>32. ... we were all connected</p> <p>33. ... like the part we were at said "How did you see God today?" or something like</p>	
	<p>Margaret</p> <p>Martha</p> <p>James</p>	

	<p>that, I think that's how the question was, you know, it was cool the fact that some people like said stuff and you were like, "Hmm, same thing." Right?</p> <p>34. ... like I felt like more of a positive person and like one of the questions says, "What's God calling you to? Calling you to do? Like today or this week" or whatever it said like I think we also reflected on the good and the bad and we realized what good can we do and I think it was more positive.</p> <p>35. It's kind of nicer with my Mom. I don't know if I would – or I don't know when I would do it if I did it alone or if I would remember.</p> <p>36. I thought it was just easy in general because I guess we're all comfortable around each other. We're a really close family so, I mean like we're not afraid to speak our minds around each other, so.</p> <p>37. Um [I liked] being with my family and talking about stuff we don't usually talk about.</p> <p>38. it's okay to like to tell people like your family about how you feel about these things and stuff.</p> <p>39. It was interesting, right then at that moment we had a lot to pray for and a lot to think about.</p>	<p>Michael</p> <p>Paul</p> <p>Elizabeth</p>

Participant	MEANING UNIT: REFERENCE TO GOD AND SCRIPTURE	REFERENCE TO GOD AND SCRIPTURE	REFERENCE TO GOD AND SCRIPTURE
Harmony	<p>40. I felt as if I was being called to remember that God is above all other things in my life, and that I have to remember not to let other things take the place of God.</p> <p>41. And we both agreed that like it's amazing how God can do works like that because they were so old (Abram &amp; Sarai) and stuff and how</p> <p>42. ... and I think it helped, it was an opportunity to feel closer to God in a time that I wouldn't be usually. In the car you don't always feel close to God.</p> <p>43. I felt like God will always forgive us even if we do something really bad.</p> <p>44. I didn't really feel like I was being called to do something in a certain way.</p> <p>45. I was feeling that even through tough times and we do something wrong and feel guilty, God always new the right move.</p> <p>46. I wonder why God would choose the commandments he did, although I do not disagree with them. I believe I was called to follow them as they are what god deems "Good" and "proper".</p> <p>47. The passage that we read was about the Good Samaritan and I felt God was calling me to be like the Samaritan; kind and generous no matter who is in need.</p> <p>48. ... the part that stood out to me was when Jesus told the lawyer to "go and do</p>	<p>a) Through <i>Lectio Divina</i> with their families, youth actively engaged the scripture: asking questions, feeling called, offering insight.</p> <p>b) Youth gave voice to divine wonder, forgiveness, and justice – often seeking and experiencing the presence of God.</p> <p>c) The experience of God and engagement of the scripture was often mediated through meditation, silence, and discussion.</p>	<p>a) <i>Lectio Divina</i> in the home provided youth with a dynamic experience of bringing their own spiritual quest to an encounter with the Christian tradition.</p> <p>b) During <i>Lectio Divina</i> and afterward, youth demonstrated a capacity to expressively articulate issues of ethics, theology, and religious experience.</p> <p>c) The interplay between, reading scripture, silence, and spoken word embedded in <i>Lectio Divina</i> provided a context in which youth were comfortable to engage a spiritual practice on their own terms.</p>
Esther			
Michael			
Judith			

<p>Paul</p>	<p>likewise" (referring to the Good Samaritan), and I felt like that was what God was telling me with that passage.</p> <p>49. ... felt closer [to God]</p> <p>50. [I was called] to be silent when others were talking, listen</p>	
<p>Margaret</p>	<p>51. Um, I don't know, I guess it became more of a conscious thing, like, you know, doing that, you know, once a week became more of a conscious way of meditating on the Bible and I would think about it more often and even like during Easter I started like after the last like reading we did I kept reading. I read like Acts and stuff like that and go back and read other parts of the Bible and just think about it differently</p> <p>52. Um, well when you're meditating on the passage and you're like, "How do you see God today?" you do like think about it because I've never really thought about that before. So you do like think about it but it didn't really raise any questions</p>	
<p>Martha</p>	<p>53. I felt that God wanted me to be the person that didn't get as much pay, but take it glad that I got what I needed. At the end, I was thinking of all the things that I could do to be that person.</p> <p>54. I was just meditative kind of. Like I was just thinking about it – it's a lot to take in. Jesus knew exactly what was coming right? And he was really brave because he you know he uh – as Dad said, a man with</p>	

	<p>a plan. He knew what was coming and then he just walked right into it.</p> <p>55. Yeah because like you knew what he did first every year, but just it's a lot you know, like for somebody to love you so unconditionally they would go out and you know be there like that. That's a lot.</p> <p>56. God is definitely just.</p> <p>57. I think I felt close to God during this because I was closer to my family and I felt more connected with them. I felt like I had to behave like a better person afterwards because I felt I could be a better person.</p>	James
	<p>58. I was looking for the strength that God could give me that day ...</p> <p>59. I was honestly thinking about the questions and where I needed to see him [God] today to make it through the night.</p> <p>60. ... it was just a good place to then connect with God and believe that he would help my family get through this time ...</p>	Elizabeth
	<p>61. Um, there was one reading. Something like uh when like a seed is planted – when a seed is just a seed it's not really anything and when the plants like kind of dies away it's like more.. At first, like when you first think about it there's like not that much to it and then we thought about it more and it was like, "Whoa there's more." ... at first thought, there wasn't much to it, it's just like, a plant growing and then when you think about it more it's like it can</p>	Miriam

	have more meaning to it. So... Well, that like when you kind of like give up something you can be helping, you know, like producing a lot more, being more.			
Participant	MEANING UNIT: CALM, RELAXED, PEACEFUL/CORPOREALITY			
Miriam	62. During this whole time I feel calm and relaxed and more focused on the words that I'm reading and are being read to me.			
Judith	63. After we finished keeping our silence, we went on with our days, relaxed and renewed.			
Margaret	64. It was relaxing which is why we did it before bed. So it was like, calming.			
Martha James	65. At the end of each <i>Lectio Divina</i> session, I feel calm and relaxed. Feeling fortified ...I am ready for the oncoming week			
Miriam	66. Tranquil			
Michael	67. ... we just pondered on thoughts and stuff and we explained a bunch of stuff			
Elizabeth	68. ... we were all relaxed and all good.			
	69. Um it like gave you a moment to like not have to worry about all the other stuff you had to do so I guess it was more like calm.			
	70. ... it would just be me and my Mom and she would read and then we would have moments of peace			
	71. It was nice to do. Some quiet time.			
	72. After I really started to enjoy it because it was a good time to just sit there, be calm.			
	73. ... like we'd be half asleep and half not, because we'd be in like deep thought or something, and it was a good wind down.			
		CALM, RELAXED, PEACEFUL/ CORPOREALITY		
			a) Youth enjoyed a sense of calm, relaxation, and peacefulness during <i>Lectio Divina</i> .	
				a) <i>Lectio Divina</i> provided youth with a time and space in which a meditative and prayerful state could be achieved in the midst of lived experience that is often otherwise.

Participant	MEANING UNIT: BUSYNESS/TEMPORAL	BUSYNESS/TEMPORAL	BUSYNESS/TEMPORAL
Harmony	<p>74. We had just finished dinner, and it was after a stressful, busy day.</p> <p>75. I had a hard time like when we were supposed to be contemplating the Scripture, just thinking of Scripture and not thinking about where I'm going and what I have to do next during my day and stuff or just getting caught up with everything else that was going on. So it was difficult to like just take the time thinking of the Scripture,</p> <p>76. Hard to do, well, it was hard to find time to do it</p> <p>77. We end up doing the reading after dinner when we both seem not to be doing something for once.</p> <p>78. Like sometimes it was like calm and you used it like you know you had a lot of time and other times it felt kind of rushed if we knew we had other things we had to do after.</p>	<p>a) Overwhelmingly youth acknowledged the busyness of their lives and that of their families.</p> <p>b) Busyness was a significant obstacle to scheduling time to do <i>Lectio Divina</i>.</p> <p>c) For some, <i>Lectio Divina</i> provided relief and respite from the stress.</p>	<p>a) In the midst of the fullness of life, often experienced as busyness, the spiritual practice of <i>Lectio Divina</i> required an intentional setting aside of time.</p> <p>b) Paradoxically, though busyness and its related stress was at times an inhibitor of its practice, <i>Lectio Divina</i> served as a counter balance and balm to the stress often caused by time constraints, hectic schedules, even conflict.</p>
Esther	<p>79. ... because like of all the things we've been doing I have so much homework – tonight I have four subjects to get done and um with like my Mom she has baseball coming up so she's at meetings like every night.</p>		
Margaret	<p>80. We tried to do it, three times a week. We did all the readings, but we really got busy so we did it sometimes in one.</p>		

<p>81. Um, finding time probably was a bit trickier. Coordinating schedules so like, you know, having everyone not busy at that time. So it was easier to sort of set like a time ahead of schedule to be like, “we’re going to do it at this point in time.” But like making sure Mom wasn’t busy, you know, I wasn’t busy, Dad wasn’t busy stuff like that. Doing it together –getting everyone – also getting everyone here.</p>		<p>Michael</p>
<p>82. Um nothing really obstacle wise or anything like that no. Perhaps time constraints when we couldn’t get them all in.</p>		<p>Paul</p>
<p>83. On days that I didn’t have stuff to do, like if I was busy and I had to do something after dinner then I wanted to get it over with, but the days that I didn’t have anything, yeah I did.</p>		<p>Judith</p>
<p>84. It was just like sometimes we left it to the last minute, sometimes we were all on time. It was kind of depending on our schedules I guess.</p>		<p>Elizabeth</p>
<p>85. ... that night was the worst of nights for it to happen, now the fight was bad and there was name calling and rude things said.</p>		
<p>86. It was the best <i>Lectio Divina</i> I ever had.</p>		
<p>87. Yeah, there were a lot of obstacles, we are a very busy family, I’m very busy, we’re all very busy, so there were some times.</p>		



	<p>88. It's hard to find time .... sit down all the time as a family.</p> <p>89. ... it's like after a really stressful day especially we could come home and we'd all just sit here and do <i>Lectio Divina</i></p>		
Participant	<p>MEANING UNIT: PATTERN OF <i>LECTION DIVINA</i></p>	PATTERN OF <i>LECTION DIVINA</i>	PATTERN OF <i>LECTION DIVINA</i>
Harmony	<p>90. I read the scripture through, we had a couple minutes of silence, then I read through it again.</p>	<p>a) Within the general guidelines set forth for <i>Lectio Divina</i> each family found its own pattern, including:</p>	<p>a) <i>Lectio Divina</i>, as a externally provided resource and spiritual practice, provided a structure embedded in tradition that was easily followed and at times adapted.</p>
Esther	<p>91. I'd read it and my Mom would be driving on the way to lessons or something.</p> <p>92. Well usually we would sit at the dinner table and do it. And I would read one passage, and then we'd think about it and then my Mum would read it and say something that was on her mind about it and then my Dad would read it and then we'd say a word or phrase that like caught our mind or...</p> <p>93. ... my dad would do the dishes while my mom and I would sit at the table eating our dessert. After we would read it we kept silent for 1 minute and then read it again. We all take turns reading, 1st I would read then my mom would read and the 3rd time my dad would read it.</p> <p>94. My mom reads the paragraph first, we take a little bit of time of silence and then we go do something quietly, while thinking of the reading and what it means for about 10 minutes ... I read the passage again and we do the same thing</p>	<p>a) more discussion than silence</p> <p>b) more silence than discussion</p> <p>c) laughter</p> <p>d) lying still throughout</p> <p>e) Engaging is household activities, moving about the house</p> <p>b) Frequency of <i>Lectio Divina</i> varied from one to three times a week.</p>	<p>b) <i>Lectio Divina</i>, though a structured spiritual practice, was lived into by families, who brought their own unique household character into its practice: some preferring silence, others discussion; some stillness, other activity.</p>

Judith	<p>once more. My mom reads the passage for the third time, we be silent</p> <p>95. We each took turns reading the passage, then keeping silent and thinking about it.</p> <p>96. We would sit down on the couches and I would recline my chair and lean back um and then we would take turns reading it and then keeping silence and then the first couple times we used to ask the questions like that were on the paper and afterwards we just kind of held the silence because the questions had become known. We just kind of thought about it.</p>	
Paul	<p>97. [we] followed the instructions in the package, and sat at the dinner table</p> <p>98. [we] talked a bit when it was supposed to be silent</p>	
Margaret	<p>99. We all take turns reading from different versions of the Bible while the others sit quietly, listening. Generally, Mom reads the most often and I the least, as I prefer to sit</p>	
James	<p>100. ... very still and listen.</p> <p>101. We all sat when we were doing it but it was our first time doing <i>Lectio Divina</i> so it wasn't as silent as it was supposed to be. My Dad started reading the reading 9: 8-17 from Genesis first then I read and then my Mom.</p> <p>102. It started off um – it said we were supposed to be silently keep quiet for a couple of moments, but I don't think we were, to be honest but, we still had like a</p>	

Elizabeth	<p>religious moment,</p> <p>103. Well we were sitting there and my father would asked " how to do you see God today" " what did god help you with" or whatever the questions we asked</p> <p>104. I feel like we probably followed the description very well because well, you are my father, but um, who is doing the study so,</p> <p>105. We just sat there and read it three times and just basically did what the paper said.</p> <p>106. We followed the description.</p>		
Participant	<p>MEANING UNIT: EXPRESSION OF ENJOYMENT</p>	EXPRESSION OF ENJOYMENT	EXPRESSION OF ENJOYMENT
Margaret	107. Um, I think that we all like enjoyed it, we all wanted to do it, so we were all enthusiastic and...	a) Youth experienced <i>Lectio Divina</i> with their families as being very positive – it was for them fun and nice.	a) <i>Lectio Divina</i> in the home was for the youth a source of joy and fun.
Martha	108. We liked it. Yeah, it was nice 109. I liked thinking about God and everything because I wouldn't normally do that a lot. Well I do, but like not reading the Bible and meditating on it like <i>Lectio Divina</i> . So it was nice just to you know take a moment and just you know.		
James	110. I found it was fun ... it was fun		
Miriam	111. we had some good laughs 112. Um yeah it was nice, not having to worry about – you had an excuse not to do all your other stuff for twenty minutes, not have to think about the other stuff.		

Harmony Paul Judith Elizabeth	<p>113. It was fun, it was inspiring, enlightening.</p> <p>114. yeah we did it and it was fun.</p> <p>115. Happy and uplifting.</p> <p>116. It was nice</p> <p>117. it ... was a nice way to start the morning.</p>	CONTINUING <i>LECTIO DIVINA</i>	CONTINUING <i>LECTIO DIVINA</i>
Participant	MEANING UNIT: CONTINUING <i>LECTIO DIVINA</i>	CONTINUING <i>LECTIO DIVINA</i>	CONTINUING <i>LECTIO DIVINA</i>
Margaret Esther James Miriam	<p>118. I could see that as a possibility because we all liked it right so we were thinking of continuing it even if it's not like for a research project.</p> <p>119. It was something I've never done before. I would do it again.</p> <p>120. Definitely, yeah. I'd like to. It's fun, we have some good times so...</p> <p>121. Um I don't think it'll get done a lot. At my house, no. Because it was hard enough doing it like over the span of like five, six weeks so I can't see us like trying to continue it. Like we could probably do it like whenever we thought about it, but that wouldn't be very often, I don't think. Yeah, it probably wouldn't be realistic.</p>	<p>a) Many youth expressed a desire and saw the value in to continuing a home family practice of <i>Lectio Divina</i>.</p> <p>b) Those who didn't express a desire to continue, felt it was more a matter of finding the time.</p>	<p>a) <i>Lectio Divina</i> was a positive and unique enough experience that the youth expressed a desire to continue practicing in their homes, with their family.</p> <p>b) The constructs of contemporary life are such that the continuation of <i>Lectio Divina</i> was, perhaps prophetically, questioned by some youth as not being realistic – most likely, if at all, on an episodic or seasonal basis.</p>
Harmony Paul Elizabeth	<p>122. No, not on a regular basis. I can imagine doing it sometimes like maybe during Advent a couple of times During Lent. But not on a regular basis.</p> <p>123. I would do it [<i>Lectio Divina</i>] again</p> <p>124. ... a time to be calm and just sit there and pray and I honestly thought we</p>		

	<p>should do that more often because it helped everyone calm down.</p> <p>125. Um, I really wouldn't mind it to be honest ... now that I've done like <i>Lectio Divina</i> I actually don't mind it, it's good to do with your family some times.</p>		
Participant	<p>MEANING UNIT: CHANGE OR GROWTH IN FAITH OR FEELING AND THINKING ABOUT GOD</p>	CHANGE OR GROWTH IN FAITH OR FEELING AND THINKING ABOUT GOD	CHANGE OR GROWTH IN FAITH OR FEELING AND THINKING ABOUT GOD
Martha Margaret Esther	<p>126. I'm not quite sure that it did. Like I don't think it changed anything.</p> <p>127. I feel ... closer ... to God ...</p> <p>128. I learned a lot about like God and like the passages and everything and I learned a lot of life lessons.</p> <p>129. Like, when Jesus says like "Listen to me, and I'm right" and everything I learned to always like – like I pray every night so I learned that if he answers me then I've listened. If I have a question or yeah, something like that.</p> <p>130. Well I feel like he's always there for me, whenever I need him. Yeah, that's pretty much it.</p> <p>131. Okay, well I'm being picked on a lot at school and like I always feel like God's always telling me that it's going to be okay, just talk to your family about it and they'll call into the school and they did, of course they did, but um yeah so he [god] was just there like supporting me and</p>	<p>a) While some youth expressed a change in their faith or feelings and thoughts about God, others did not.</p> <p>b) Youth did readily give expression to a deepening of their faith, gaining new insights to the nature of God, the value of silent meditation and the impact of encountering scripture through <i>Lectio Divina</i> at home.</p> <p>c) Most youth began to make</p>	<p>a) <i>Lectio Divina</i> at home provided the youth with a dynamic and rich spiritual experience - a connection with God as encountered in family, silence, reflection, and sacred test.</p> <p>b) Though the language of "change of faith" was not ubiquitously accepted, <i>Lectio Divina</i> was experienced by youth as an enrichment of faith and feeling and thinking about God.</p> <p>c) <i>Lectio Divina</i> served as a means for most youth to see the divine at work in many</p>

James	<p>everything.</p> <p>132. one time we were doing it and we reading the passage and it was about uh, Noah's Ark ...Yeah, about the rainbow, yeah, yeah. And it said every time you see a rainbow, that's my promise to you ... Right so um – I thought, that's pretty cool because you know, I see rainbows a lot of the time so whenever I see one now like, you know, I think of that.</p> <p>133. Um, I think it's changed me for the better, more positive because I feel like other people have the same thoughts as me and stuff like that so I feel more one with everybody else.</p> <p>134. it's just that like I already knew, like I always felt the same it's just like bumped it up, there's like more.</p> <p>135. Well, I feel more connected because like now like after all the passages I've read and everything – we read them like over and over and over and like three times and silence and you know, it sticks to you, especially like the rainbow thing that sticks in my head all the time so now, like, I feel closer to God.</p> <p>136. Um for like the half an hour or twenty minutes you were thinking more about like what the reading was about or like – just like about God in general and then, but not so much after when you were done. You kind of just got like pushed on and you kept doing your day.</p>	<p>a greater connection between their faith and their everyday lived experience.</p> <p>d) A few youth, while valuing the experience of <i>Lectio Divina</i> (i.e. the peacefulness or thinking about God), questioned the experience as divine or as impacting the rest of life.</p>	<p>other aspects of lived experience.</p>
Miriam			

<p>Michael</p>	<p>137. Um, a little bit. You have to like consider like do I actually believe in this story or like what parts of it are you going to believe and which parts are you going to read in between the lines and like what part of it you want to follow.</p> <p>138. I suppose I did experience peace. I don't know if that's experiencing God though.</p>		
<p>Harmony</p>	<p>139. Um a bit because uh like I've gone through and read passages in the Bible before, but when you do it like with lectio divina because you're reading it more than once you, uh, it stays in your mind more.</p> <p>140. I think I feel closer to God with her [Hamony's mother] now</p>		
<p>Paul Judith</p>	<p>141. I feel closer to God</p> <p>142. Not really how I feel about [God], but it was nice having like that extra time to just like, connect instead of just being all busy and doing my homework the whole time. It was like a break.</p> <p>143. Just like thinking about the reading and then comparing it with my life and stuff. [I felt connected] to God and Jesus and [my parents] too, yeah. I guess I saw their connection with God a bit too instead of like at Church, I'm never really with them downstairs, when I'm up at the altar or I come down later.</p>		
<p>Elizabeth</p>	<p>144. The more I did it the more like I actually thought about the questions</p>		

	<p>being asked and listened to like the scripture, I guess.</p> <p>145. I don't know, me and God were pretty tight before so, I don't know.</p> <p>146. Hmm, yeah, I guess, it like just made me respect my religion more I guess, because it's really sacred and you're either really religious or you're not, there's like no half ass religion like doing lecto devina made me like appreciate my religion more and that I should respect it and learn more about it and stuff.</p> <p>147. I believe what was said in the Bible is true, and I believe in God, and I mean you always have questions about God, like God seems like a sketchy character some of the time and so</p> <p>148. I get like in Jesus' time, Bible time, there was a lot of proof that God existed but like where's God been at lately, like the past 100 years, like there's not stories about it, and so people have a lot of doubts about God, like not being here, because like you don't know, you just have to believe, really so ...</p> <p>149. No, like I still really believe in God I still like, it really hasn't changed. I used to think that God was a little bit sketchy but like I still really believe in him like it hasn't changed since lecto devina it's just like it's still like my belief more, I guess.</p> <p>150. I think what I got out of it most</p>	
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	was like the questions we were asked of how you see God in your day or like what do you think God wanted you to do today, like I got the most out of that.		



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Title of Content: Bringing it Home  
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Date Content was Created: 2013  
Description of Content: Doctor of Ministry Thesis

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